







J. Whaley

F. E. Teerman Sc.



MONSIEUR DE ROYANCOURT'S NOTE.

Drawn by J. Wagrez, etched by Teànnin.

SYLVANDIRE. *Frontispiece.*





*The Romances of Alexandre Dumas.*

NEW SERIES.

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SYLVANDIRE,

A ROMANCE OF THE REIGN OF  
LOUIS XIV.

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

BOSTON:

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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"THE reign of Louis XIV.," says M. Arsène Hous-saye,<sup>1</sup> "is divided into three periods, dominated by three influences, — three stars, three women.

"The first is the epoch of half-Spanish, half-French gallantry. It is personified in Mademoiselle de la Vallière. . . .

"The second period of the reign is symbolized by Madame de Montespan, . . . who exults in being queen by grace of Love. With her opens the military epic, the era of conquest. The tendency is to materialism of the heart, to paganism of sentiment. . . . It is the age of action, of maturity, of strength. Everything yields to the victorious king, — citadels and women.

"The third and last part of the reign is summed up in Madame de Maintenon. Sensual mysticism has replaced the pomp and activity of the old court. The dying century becomes a hermit, glory takes the veil. . . . Louis XIV., that king over whom a woman reigns, droops slowly toward his grave. . . . Madame de Maintenon is the hand by which the Gallican church sways the old age of Louis XIV.

<sup>1</sup> "Galerie du XVIII<sup>me</sup> Siècle. — La Régence."

Quietism offends the shrewd, powerful, intriguing woman, who bears, not without dignity, the weight of the crown. That uncrowned queen gives its shape, as they said in those days, to the close of the reign. . . . Everything assumes the mask of piety."

And again he says: "If his youth was imprisoned in the dense forest of the passions, as Saint Augustine hath it, his old age was confined behind bolts and bars in an impenetrable citadel, of which Scar-ron's widow was the keeper. There are no more abject slaves than tyrants."

It would be easy to multiply authorities in support of the accuracy of the picture drawn by Dumas in these pages of the state of society in the first decade of the eighteenth century, when, under the leadership of the incompetent generals who owed their commissions to their subservience to "Scar-ron's widow," France was struggling on, from defeat to defeat, from Blenheim to Ramillies and Turin and Oudenarde and Malplaquet, through the bloody, disastrous years of the War of the Spanish Succession.

It was the period of the "government of the saints."<sup>1</sup> From the fall of Louvois in 1691, Madame de Maintenon's influence was practically unlimited and unshared until after the crushing disaster of Blenheim (1704), when she was obliged to come to terms, and, to some extent, share her power with the Duc de Bourgogne, and his governors, the Ducs de Chevreuse and de Beauvilliers, and with the king's confessor, "a hard-hearted, atrabilious old

<sup>1</sup> Michelet.

villain, Père Tellier, whose bitter gall made the whites of his squinting eyes yellow."

Versailles was a gloomy place during the supremacy of Madame de Maintenon and her Jesuit allies, and that supremacy endured until the death of the king in 1715, when the accession to power of the pleasure-loving, easy-going Regent inaugurated an era of license and immorality. Not only was the power of the favorite shown in the repression of gayety and amusement in every form, but her favor and that of the ultra-religious faction counted for vastly more than the patronage of the greatest nobles in the distribution of lucrative offices and of commissions in the army and navy. However great a man's merit might be, his chance of preferment or promotion was small, unless he were resigned to the necessity of going to Versailles with a sanctimonious expression on his face, and kissing La Maintenon's withered hand.

The episode of the chevalier's arrest and imprisonment is entirely consistent with the customs of the time. The history of the Bastille is full of instances which vouch for its probability. It will be remembered that the one fact which more than any other drew the attention of the Parisian populace to the grim old fortress in 1789 was the recent release of one Latude, who had been confined there for more than forty years upon no ascertainable charge, but presumably to gratify the enmity of some powerful family or individual. During the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century no more heinous offence could be committed than to speak

or write slightly of the old king's unacknowledged wife, nor could any surer way of ruining an enemy be devised than to bring to her notice evidence of such sacrilege.

In his "Mémoires" (vol. 9), Dumas tells us of his first venture in the domain of historical romance. Soon after the founding of the "Revue des Deux Mondes,"<sup>1</sup> he contributed to that periodical certain "Scènes Historiques" relating to the reign of Charles VI., adapted from Barante's "Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne," and afterwards published under the title "Isabel de Bavière." He tells us that he was utterly ignorant of French history until he read Barante's book, but that the success of his "Scènes Historiques," which made one of the first successes of the "Revue des Deux Mondes," led him to decide to write a series of romances extending from the reign of Charles VI. to our own time. How nearly he accomplished his design the volumes previously published in this series will sufficiently show. There is, however, a hiatus between the conclusion of the "Vicomte de Bragelonne"<sup>2</sup> and the "Chevalier d'Harmental," the action of which takes place in the early years of the Regency, about 1717. That hiatus the present volume serves partially to fill.

<sup>1</sup> In 1830 or 1831 the periodical called "Journal des Voyages" was purchased by M. Buloz and others, who changed its name as well as its character, and called it the "Revue des Deux Mondes."

<sup>2</sup> The death of D'Artagnan seems to have occurred between 1680 and 1690.

# CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE CHEVALIER ROGER TANCREDÈ D'ANGUILHEM AND HIS FAMILY, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1708 . . . . .	1
II. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM, WHOM SOME OF THE DAMES OF LOCHES AND ITS VICINITY CALLED "HANDSOME ROGER," OTHERS, "HAND- SOME TANCREDÈ," DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD A HEART . . . . .	21
III. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM, DISCOVERING THAT HE HAD A HEART, WISHED TO BE AS- SURED THAT MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE ALSO HAD ONE . . . . .	36
IV. IN WHICH THE AUTHOR DEMONSTRATES THAT FATHERS AND MOTHERS OF DAUGHTERS IN CONVENTS CAN SLEEP ON BOTH EARS . . . .	54
V. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM ESCAPED FROM THE COLLEGE OF THE JESUITS AT AM- BOISE, WITH THE INTENTION OF CARRYING OFF MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE, AND WHAT NEWS HE LEARNED ON REACHING THE CONVENT . .	72
VI. IN WHICH WE ARE TOLD THAT THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WAS SO OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF AT THE DEATH OF MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE THAT HE RESOLVED TO BECOME A JESUIT . . . . .	92



CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. HOW MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE APPEARED BEFORE THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM TO DISSUADE HIM FROM TAKING THE VOWS .	104
VIII. HOW IT WAS LEARNED AT ANGUILHEM AND AT BEUZERIE THAT THE VICOMTE DE BOUZENOIS, EX-CAPTAIN OF THE FRIGATE THETIS, HAD DIED INTESATE, AND WHAT MODIFICATION THE NEWS WROUGHT IN THE PLANS OF THE TWO FAMILIES . .	115
IX. HOW AND ON WHAT TERMS THE MARRIAGE OF MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE WITH THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM CAME NEAR BEING ARRANGED BY THEIR NEXT OF KIN . . .	127
X. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM MADE HIS ENTRY INTO SOCIETY . . . . .	140
XI. HOW THE CHEVALIER PROFITS BY THE FENCING LESSONS GIVEN HIM BY THE BARON D'ANGUILHEM, HIS FATHER . . . . .	161
XII. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM BECOMES ACQUAINTED WITH THE SON OF THE EAST INDIAN, AND THE KIND OF PERSON HE FINDS HIM TO BE . . . . .	175
XIII. HOW, JUST AS THE CHEVALIER HAD FALLEN A PREY TO THE PROFOUNDTEST DESPAIR, A STRANGER VISITED HIM TO MAKE A PROPOSITION NOT EXPECTED BY HIM, NOR BY THE READER . . . . .	192
XIV. HOW THE MYSTERIOUS MAN APPEARS A SECOND TIME, AND HOW, IN THIS SECOND INTERVIEW, MATTERS SEEM A LITTLE CLEARER	201
XV. HOW THE JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN . . . . .	215
XVI. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM PHILOSOPHICALLY RESIGNS HIMSELF TO A PRETTY WIFE, A MAGNIFICENT HÔTEL, AND AN INCOME OF SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND LIVRES .	227
XVII. HOW THE CHEVALIER FOUND HIMSELF IN SUCH LUCK THAT HE WAS READY, LIKE	

# CONTENTS.

xi

CHAPTER	PAGE
POLYCRATES, THE TYRANT OF SAMOS, TO CAST A RING INTO THE SEA . . . . .	236
XVIII. HOW THE CONJUGAL HORIZON OF THE CHEVA- LIER D'ANGUILHEM GRADUALLY CLOUDED OVER . . . . .	246
XIX. HOW THE CONJUGAL HORIZON OF THE CHEVA- LIER D'ANGUILHEM GREW SUDDENLY TEMPESTUOUS . . . . .	257
XX. FINDING THAT PERMISSION TO LEAVE IS NOT GRANTED HIM, THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUIL- HEM RESOLVES TO LEAVE WITHOUT PER- MISSION . . . . .	269
XXI. HOW THE KING NEGLECTED TO REPAIR THE INJUSTICE DONE THE CHEVALIER D'AN- GUILHEM, AND WHAT FOLLOWED . . . . .	282
XXII. HOW THE KING AT LAST REMEMBERS THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM, AND WHAT COMES OF IT . . . . .	297
XXIII. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WENT FROM THE BASTILE TO THE CHÂTEAU DE CHÂLON-SUR-SAÔNE, AND MADE THE JOURNEY IN COMPANY WITH AN OFFICER OF VERY SPRIGHTLY CHARACTER . . . . .	316
XXIV. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM BECOMES AS WISE AND AS WARY AS HAD BEEN THE LATE COMTE D'OLIBARUS . . . . .	328
XXV. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM SET FIRE TO HIS HÔTEL TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE WAS OR WAS NOT WHAT HE FEARED . . . . .	342
XXVI. HOW ROGER AND SYLVANDIRE MADE A CHARMING EXCURSION TO PROVENCE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT . . . . .	357
XXVII. HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM LEARNED THAT HIS FATHER HAD NOT DELIVERED TO MADemoisELLE DE BEUZERIE THE LETTER RESTORING HER FREEDOM, AND WHAT CAME OF IT . . . . .	372

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXVIII.	HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM AND MADemoisELLE CONSTANCE DE BEUZERIE FIND THEMSELVES MORE IN LOVE THAN EVER, AND SOME OF THE PERPLEXITIES INTO WHICH ROGER IS THEREBY PLUNGED	385
XXIX.	HOW THE PERSIAN AMBASSADOR, MEHEMET RIZA BEG, CAME TO PARIS TO PRESENT THE RESPECTFUL COMPLIMENTS OF HIS SOVEREIGN TO LOUIS XIV., AND HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WAS CON- STRAINED TO PAY A VISIT TO THAT IL- LUSTRIous PERSONAGE . . . . .	398
XXX.	HOW THE MARQUIS DE CRETTE NEGOTIATED MATTERS IN THE NAME OF THE CHEVA- LIER D'ANGUILHEM, AND BROUGHT THIS ENTIRE STORY TO A MOST UNEXPECTED ISSUE . . . . .	412
	CONCLUSION . . . . .	425

## LIST OF CHARACTERS.

Period, 1708-1716.

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LOUIS XIV., King of France.

MADAME DE MAINTENON.

MARQUIS DE ROYANCOURT, a favorite of Madame de Maintenon.

PÈRE LETELLIER.

BARON AGÉNOR PALAMÈDE D'ANGUILHEM.

LA BARONNE CORNÉLIE ATHENAÏS D'ANGUILHEM, his wife.

CHEVALIER ROGER TANCREDÈ D'ANGUILHEM, their son.

ABBÉ DUBUQVOI, tutor to the Chevalier.

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR OF THE CONVENT OF THE AUGUSTINES,  
the Chevalier's aunt.

VICOMTE DE BOUZENOIS, a relative of Baron d'Anguilhem.

MADAME DE BOUZENOIS, his wife, a native of Malabar.

MONSIEUR AFGHANO, her son, an East Indian.

MARQUIS DE CHEMILLÉ,

MONSIEUR GANTRY,

MONSIEUR DE BIRGAROU,

} friends of Baron d'Anguilhem.

VICOMTE DE BEUZERIE, a neighbor of Baron d'Anguilhem.

MADAME DE BEUZERIE, his wife.

CONSTANCE DE BEUZERIE, their daughter, in love with the  
Chevalier.

MADemoiselle HERMINIE DE NARCEY, friend to Constance.

HENRI DE NARCEY, her brother.

THE CURÉ OF LA CHAPELLE SAINT-HIPPOLYTE.

MAÎTRE COQUENARD, attorney to Baron d'Anguilhem.

MARQUIS DE CRETTE, friend to the Chevalier.

VICOMTE D'HERBIGNY,  
 COMTE DE CHASTELLUX,  
 MONSIEUR DE TRÉVILLE, } friends to Marquis de Cretté.  
 CHEVALIER DE CLOS-RENAUD, }  
 BASQUE, valet to Marquis de Cretté.  
 BOISJOLI,  
 RAMEAU-D'OR, } servants to the Marquis.  
 PETITPAS, }  
 BRETON, servant to the Chevalier.  
 MESSIEURS DE KOLLINSKI, Hungarian gentlemen.  
 COMTE DE GORKAÛN, } their friends.  
 MONSIEUR DE BARDANE, }  
 MADemoisELLE Poussette, of the Comédie-Française.  
 MAÎTRE BRANCHU, } advocates.  
 MAÎTRE VERNIQUET, }  
 MAÎTRE JEAN AMÉDÉE BOUTEAU, *conseiller-rapporteur*.  
 CHRISTINE SYLVANDIRE BOUTEAU, his daughter.  
 THE GOVERNOR OF FOR-L'ÉVÊQUE.  
 COMTE D'OLIBARUS, a prisoner at For-l'Évêque and the Bastile.  
 MONSIEUR VOYER D'ARGENSON, lieutenant of police.  
 AN AGENT OF MAÎTRE BOUTEAU.  
 A SARDINIAN BROKER.  
 A TUNISIAN CORSAIR.  
 MESDEMOISELLES MARIE and GOTHON, servants in the household  
 of Baron d'Anguilhem.  
 LA JEUNESSE, the Baron d'Anguilhem's gamekeeper.

# SYLVANDIRE.



## I.

THE CHEVALIER ROGER TANCREDÈ D'ANGUILHEM AND  
HIS FAMILY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1708.

IN a work much more serious than this one pretends to be, we have shown how the French nobility were marked for destruction by three men: Louis XI., Richelieu, Robespierre. Louis XI. felled the feudal lords, Richelieu laid low the *grandeues*, Robespierre cut down the aristocracy.

The first paved the way for the centralized monarchy, the second for the absolute monarchy, the third for the constitutional monarchy.

But, as the events we are about to relate took place between the years 1708 and 1716, we shall permit history to appraise, under their social bearings, the work of the forester king and the acts and deeds of the guillotining tribune, and merely cast a swift glance over the condition of Paris and the country at large seventy years after the death of Richelieu, that is, at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

In saying Paris, we mistake, — we should say Versailles, for at that period Paris was forgotten. Louis XIV. had never been able to pardon the capital for

having cast him, child as he was, from her bosom during one of the stormy days of the Fronde, and as, in his fulness of might, he took the same pleasure in avenging himself upon things as upon men, he had created Versailles, — that unworthy favorite, as it was then called, that gigantic piece of folly, as it will in all times be called, — with intent to punish the old Louvre for its old-time rebellion by withdrawing his royal presence.

So Versailles, from the day when Louis XIV. transferred his residence thither, was the luminous centre of the realm, the torch about which all the gilded moths called courtiers gathered to scorch their wings, the sun which rose on the world, not less resplendent than others, and whose light and power must increase as it advanced.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the concentration of immeasurable splendor upon Versailles reduced the rest of the kingdom to darkness. All that did not revolve around the supreme star seemed to belong to an inferior system, an unknown vortex not worth while for the political astronomers of the time to investigate; as a result, during the seventy-three years that the reign of Louis XIV. endured, the history of Versailles is pretty nearly the history of France.

Consequently, in the magnificent gallery opened up by the memoirs of that period to the curiosity of readers, one reviews nothing but great fortunes and great failures. We follow the rise of Louvois, of Villars, of d'Argenson, of Colbert, and the fall of Rohan, of Richelieu, of Lauzun, and the Guises; but, as for the brave and loyal nobility of the provinces that formerly constituted the strength of the monarchy, which under

<sup>1</sup> *Nec pluribus impar* and *Vires acquirit eundo* formed the double device of the sun which Louis XIV. had taken for his arms.

Duguesclin had driven the Black Prince from Guyenne, and, under Joan of Arc, King Henri VI. from France, it no longer existed, or, rather, because from the field of action it gave no signs of life, one might say it had ceased to exist.

As a fact, far from the sun, and consequently from the light, it was vegetating in darkness and oblivion.

Had the choice of the subject been ours, we should without any doubt have established our hero among those fine courtiers whom Saint Simon exhibits as assisting regularly every day at the king's rising and retiring, unsettled by a frown, flourishing under a smile, and dying of despair at a sharp word; but, first of all, we are a historian, hence we must take our hero where we find him. Besides, the time may come when, attached as we are to his suite, we shall find ourselves obliged to accompany him outside of his provincial obscurity, and appear with him for a brief space in that circle of light which Versailles, even at that period of decadence, was still shedding around her.

But for the present, we beg our readers to forego Versailles, which, for that matter, Madame de Maintenon's presence had for some time rendered a very dull place of abode, and accompany us two hundred and thirty-two kilometres from Paris, as the new law compels us to say. Four kilometres forming a league, our readers will have only to divide two hundred and thirty-two by four, if they insist upon knowing their exact distance from the capital. We should prefer to spare them that trouble; but, as we are made to pay a fine of fifty francs every time we employ the old denominations, we are obliged by stress of economy to refer them to the fourth arithmetical rule; it is very awkward, but this is the way of it.



We find ourselves, then, on the left bank of the Loire, in the neighborhood of the town of Loches, in a beautiful plain between the Indre and the Cher, interspersed with woods pretentiously called forests, and pools ostentatiously spoken of as lakes.

This plain was a veritable nest of country-seats, where vegetated the remnants of all those lordly families from which Louis XI. had hacked the roots and Richelieu lopped the heads; also, thanks to the destruction of châteaux, the confiscation of lands, and the restriction of privileges, all those brave country gentlemen, high-born as Charlemagne, were as poor as Job. Robber-chiefs of old under Philip Augustus and Louis XI., heads of factions under Philip the Fair and Charles V., captains under François I. and Henri II., they had ended by becoming ensigns or sergeants in the armies of Henri IV. and Louis XIII.; then, last of all, no longer finding employment, even in the lowest ranks of the army, for the old swords of their ancestors, upon which rust had by degrees effaced the gilding, they had returned to the primitive times of which the Bible speaks, and, like Nimrod, had become mighty hunters before the Lord. In short, they were, as we have seen, the descendants of the oldest, the richest, and the noblest families in France; but, it must be admitted, they were in every respect very degenerate descendants.

In fact, the great landholders had gradually been attracted to Versailles, and old Touraine of the magnificent châteaux had emigrated with all its goods and chattels to the neighborhoods of Chartres and Maintenon. Undergoing the universal decay, Loches had ceased to be a royal town, and the country squires of the region, inhabiting a rich, peaceful, but forsaken country, however they may have combated the sov-

ereignty of silence and oblivion during the last days, had felt the pall of obscurity gradually settle down upon their heads.

Men submit to such a state of affairs, but they do not become resigned. As a result, throughout the entire province there was at this time a sullen reaction against the government of the mighty king. Thus, our gentlemen, led by their wounded self-esteem into the movement of general disaffection just mentioned, filled the places of absent things with names which recalled them. Their houses continued to be designated *châteaux*; the outer walls were ramparts, and the muddy ditch where a dozen tame ducks paddled was a moat; there was a court of honor, the sole and only court; they spoke of the armory, but its stores were ordinarily fruit or milk; lastly, there was the chapel, and it was just the nearest village church, in most cases reached only after an hour's tramp through the fields.

However, setting aside vanity, and excluding the relation between names and their values, all these country-seats might have been bowers of happiness, had their inhabitants not thought it humiliation to acknowledge they were happy. Their vanity, it is true, entrenched itself behind their disaffection, and, too poor to go to Versailles, they proclaimed aloud that they had but a low opinion of the court, and that overtures were continually made them, only to be repelled. Now, since all repeated the same thing, they were certainly under mutual obligations to appear to believe one another. Of course this petty defection did not get beyond the boundaries of the province, and, for the fifty or sixty years during which it was perpetuated as a legacy from father to son, it never reached the king's ears.

Moreover, in this little corner of the earth which

formed part of what is called the garden of France, a gentleman with an income of two thousand crowns passed for opulent; and very few indeed were the incomes that reached this desirable figure. The majority of the martyrs possessed an average income of from twenty-five hundred to three thousand livres, and a few who were reduced to one hundred and fifty or two hundred pistoles a year, still found means, in spite of this slender income, to figure not too disadvantageously, with their families, which were sometimes numerous, at the gatherings of neighboring country-seats.

Furthermore, all these brave lords, or their ancestors rather, had formerly enjoyed magnificent and very comprehensive rights which in course of time had fallen into disuse; but this fact, when they chanced to shake out their crumpled parchments, and read over their charters, did not prevent their experiencing a certain pride in the fact that they might do unspeakable things, and that they possessed the privileges of a Procrustes, a Geryon, or a Phalaris. Thus, a petty farmer of the Baron Agénor Palamède d'Anguilhem was one day very much startled to hear his lord and master proclaim at a wolf-hunt, with a stamp of his foot, —

“By a charter right of the thirteenth century, the Anguilhems may, once a year, at the chase, warm their feet in the vitals of one of their dependents ripped open by their carver.”

It is unnecessary to add that neither the worthy gentleman nor any of his ancestors had ever had such cold feet as to feel the need of resorting to this strange expedient.

As the Baron d'Anguilhem's name has just slipped from our pen, let us profit by the occasion to say who and what he was.

The Baron Agénor Palamède d'Anguilhem was one of the suzerain landholders whose fortunes we have just figured up, and whose privileges we have enumerated. He inhabited a château in the upper part of the valley, possessed sixty sheep and six cows, sold the wool for two hundred francs a year, and harvested three hundred francs' worth of hemp in the same length of time, in all five hundred francs, which he generously handed over to Madame la Baronne d'Anguilhem for the expenses of her toilet and the bringing up of her son.

Madame la Baronne Cornélie Athenais d'Anguilhem had only six gowns, but they were each, if not perfectly fashionable, at least exquisitely beautiful. One dated from her wedding, another from the christening of her son, who was by courtesy styled baronet, although, in the aristocratic hierarchy, he had a right only to the title of chevalier, which title simply we shall give him, not being influenced by the motives of flattery that prompted those who surrounded him. As for the baroness' other four dresses, they were of more recent date and more modern cut; yet this did not prevent their having seen at least two lustres, which had detracted a trifle *du leur*,<sup>1</sup> as the bantering Marquis de Chemillé, their neighbor two leagues away, used to say in a witticism replete with novelty and taste.

The baronet, or rather, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède d'Anguilhem, heir presumptive to the domains of Anguilhem, La Pintade, and La Guérite, that is to say, to sixty acres of tillable land, twenty acres of woodland, and an orchard planted out to cabbages, was entering upon his fifteenth year. He was a tall, handsome lad, who was able to course a hare very prettily upon his

<sup>1</sup> A play on the word *leur*, "them," and *leurre*, "lure," "decoy."  
— TR.

own legs, and shot like Maitre Lajeunesse, the keeper of the barony, with the reputation of killing nineteen snipe out of twenty. He rode bareback the wildest horses in the country, and for ten leagues around had the reputation of being a veritable centaur. Finally, from the day he was five years of age, the memorable time when the Baron Agénor had placed a little rapier in his hands, he had not a single day missed fencing for an hour or two with his father, who was one of the strongest blades of the province, although, thanks to his reputation, he had never had serious occasion to draw the sword; so that, advancing lesson by lesson, step by step, stroke by stroke, the tiny blade became a long rapier, the weak tendon a steel spring, the wavering arm a rod of iron, and the child a healthy fellow who could stand all day long at guard, the body resting on the left leg and the wrist on a level with the right breast, which was the first principle of the method of the day, and which, let us say in passing, was as good as another.

Beyond these acquired advantages, the chevalier possessed, as natural gifts, beautiful blonde hair, a height of five feet five inches with a promise of more, two blue eyes with frank, clear gaze, a pair of plump rosy cheeks on which a light down was beginning to show, and an admirably turned leg. Hence all the wives of the country squires around, taking advantage of the privilege yet granted them by his extreme youth, almost always smilingly greeted him either as their handsome Roger or their handsome Tancred, according as their romantic fancies prompted them to choose for a hero the conqueror of Sicily or the lover of Clorinda.

So much for his physical characteristics; now let us turn to the mental.

This, the essential part of the education of a young man appointed to the glory of supporting and perpetuating the name of the Anguilhems, had been, from the day that a son was granted them by the goodness of God, the chief thought of both baron and baroness. Madame d'Anguilhem had given the child his first lessons in reading, writing, and ciphering. The curé of the neighboring village had taught him how to decline nouns and conjugate verbs, but that was the limit of his own learning, and, with a frankness more creditable to his honesty than to his education, he had confessed that he dared not push on his pupil to the seventh. The baron and the baroness were then very much embarrassed as to continuing the education of their son, from whom both were resolved not to be separated at his tender age, when one of their friends informed them that a certain Abbé Dubuquoi, who had just completed the education of one of the richest heirs of Loches, was looking for another pupil to perfect. This was precisely what the baron and baroness desired. Rigid inquiries were made, all of which proved favorable to the tutor; so that the Abbé Dubuquoi was installed at the château with a salary of one hundred and fifty francs, his board, and the pompous title of preceptor of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem.

Now let us say a few words concerning the château inhabited by the four personages whom we have just passed in review, one of whom, we will no longer keep secret from our readers, is destined to become the principal hero of this story. As may be divined, we refer to the youth whom, as we have said, the ladies were in the habit of designating as "handsome Tancrède" or "handsome Roger."

This château was not exactly a château; it is true that

it was not simply a house. By no means. It was a building which held a middle place between these two structures, and which might have passed for a handsome farmhouse. This farmhouse — we adopt the last name, with all respect to its noble occupants — contained eight rooms in the lower part. These rooms consisted of a dairy dignified by the name of armory hall, a dining-room, a salon adorned by three ancient portraits, scarcely recognizable, and a modern one representing an officer of the king's navy in a captain's uniform. We shall return to this portrait. There was a guard-room without guards, but ornamented with five suits of armor which belonged to the time when there were guards; this had become the living-room, and here the family assembled. There were four sleeping-rooms. The kitchen and its accessories situated underground, and the cellars under the kitchen, ran the whole length of these eight apartments. Finally, at one of the four corners of the structure rose a tower of a dozen metres in height, which was called La Guérite. Monsieur le Baron Agénor d'Anguilhem slept in the tower, and it was especially upon this tower that he based his pretension to christen the manor-house with the pompous name of château, a title, moreover, which, whether from habit or politeness, was generally accorded it in the country, and which we alone have the bad grace to contest.

This château was not one of the richest in the neighborhood. The Baron d'Anguilhem collected from the farmers to whom his dependencies were rented the sum of twelve hundred francs. Now, since in the country every one's income is known to every one else, one must be resigned either to appearing as a gentleman of small means or to lying.

The baron lied remorselessly. He professed to

derive an income of one hundred louis from the war funds and another hundred from the king's privy purse. However, we will not venture to swear that he affirmed it; but he caused it to be said and would have had it believed. Yet it was with this as with the disaffection of which we have but just spoken. No one was deceived about his income of two hundred louis, hence the Chevalier Roger Tancred d'Anguilhem did not pass in the province for a great catch.

This, however, as can readily be understood, troubled the young man very little. He was tall, he was strong. If he lacked horses of his own, those of his neighbors were at his service. He had magnificent hunting; for, by tacit agreement, each of these worthy gentlemen, too restricted in territory had he been obliged to keep within the boundaries of his own lands, was enabled to hunt over the grounds of all. He construed his Cornelius Nepos at sight, and, having as yet no wants, experienced no poverty.

In truth, what did he lack? He had a tutor whom he did not exactly hate, but whom he nevertheless regarded as a great superfluity. On returning from the hunt, thanks to the baroness' maternal foresight, he always found a generous meal, whose fragments he gave to his dog. And then, after that repast, a bed awaited him, where he could, if so minded, sleep twelve hours at a stretch. Here was wealth, or I am greatly deceived.

When Roger Tancred left the château, whether on horseback or afoot, with a gun on his shoulder, or with the Abbé Dubuquoi on his arm, the peasants working in the fields turned around to salute him, and the young gentlemen of the neighborhood paused to shake hands. This is the height of the power to which a simple heart



and a philosophical mind can aspire, or I know nothing about it.

When they entertained at the château, Roger set to work, exactly like the two servants who comprised the entire domestic service of the house. He it was who polished up the massive old silver plate bearing the family coat of arms, and helped the baroness prepare the pastry, which, like a châtelaine of the middle ages, she did not scorn to make with her own hands. More than that, since he was skilful as well as strong, he was especially charged with wiping certain Japanese porcelain which had been preserved as relics through three generations. As soon as the guests arrived, Roger Tancrède put on his best coat, which always dated back two or three years at least, passed a comb through his beautiful hair, which curled naturally, and gave his hand to the ladies.

The baron and the baroness often thought of their dear son's future, and more than once had husband and wife reviewed all the callings open to him. The father favored a military career; but the baroness had pointed out to her husband that unless he were resigned to burying the name of the d'Anguilhems in the lowest ranks of the army, there was no hope to look for in that quarter, since the future hero was not rich enough to maintain a regiment. There were indeed some exceptional cases where the king had solved the difficulty by presenting a colonel's commission and adding a gratuity of one hundred thousand crowns to the commission; but Louis XIV. had bestowed so many favors of the sort that he had declared it to be impossible for him to bestow more except on very rare occasions. Now, the king had no motive for setting aside this wise determination in favor of the Chevalier Roger Tancrède. All this is

what the baroness said aloud to her husband, when the latter broached the subject in conversation. What she said to herself was that she did not wish her poor child to be a soldier, since the last of the d'Anguilhems might very easily, like any simple peasant, get a thrust from a halberd in Flanders, or a shot from a musket on the banks of the Rhine, as frequently happened among gentlemen whose rank did not keep them on the coast.

The baron then suggested a good position in finance. Financiering even at that period was a business that might be engaged in without great derogation of dignity. But how could he secure this position which it would cost twice as much to buy as a regiment, since a regiment brought its colonel only honor and blows, while a bank position yielded its incumbent good round louis d'or? He must renounce, therefore, that career restricted to the favorites of Madame de Maintenon, Père Lachaise, and Monsieur de Maine. Now, the Baron d'Anguilhem, honest and straightforward country gentleman that he was, cordially detested the old woman, the Jesuit, and the bastards. Hence there was no great chance in that direction, and the baroness herself, however strong her desire to see her well-beloved son occupy a position that would in nowise endanger his length of days, was forced to admit with a sigh and a shake of the head that it would be arrant folly to cling to such a project.

The baron would then revert to a favorite notion with which he deluded himself in his hours of reverie. This was to make a naval officer of his son. The navy offered a noble career, and one in every particular worthy of a gentleman. Louis XIV. had made France a maritime power which was beginning to counteract England's influence and that of Holland, those two queens of the

ocean whom he had more than once succeeded in humbling, the one by means of the other, while exalting himself at the expense of both; but at this point especially, the baron encountered very lively opposition from his wife. If she had dreaded a soldier's life for her son, she had greater reason to fear that of a sailor, who had every day to combat not only the strength of men, but every caprice of the elements. Once only at the beginning of their married life had the baron and the baroness visited a seaport.

They were at Brest, and, while taking a sail, met with a squall so violent that the bark which carried them came near upsetting a hundred times, and it was only by a miracle of heaven that she regained port.

From that date, Madame d'Anguilhem, who, in reality, was possessed of as many nerves as a Parisian marquise, country woman though she was, could not bear to hear the sea spoken of. She had constant visions of her poor chevalier threatened by flashes of lightning and peals of thunder, tossed by the winds and threatened by the waves, about to be swallowed up in the depths of that liquid abyss whose prophetic voice had forewarned her; consequently, when the baron broached the subject after a thousand circumlocutions, the baroness began to shriek, and asked her husband whether, as a recompense for her exemplary conduct toward him, he intended to kill her with grief.

Then the baron, who was an excellent man, would in turn sigh profoundly and murmur, —

“Madame, madame, you are not worthy of your name of Cornelia!”

To which the baroness would reply, —

“Monsieur, we are not living in the days of the Gracchi, nor am I a Roman matron.”

In truth, the poor woman was merely a good, tender, excellent mother, which was, perhaps, of less consequence in the eyes of the philosophers, but which in the sight of God was certainly worth quite as much. They fell back then into a lasting indecision with regard to the career of the Chevalier Roger Tancrède to whom, meanwhile, they gave the best possible education, although they could see nothing in the future outlook for him but to be, like monsieur his father, a country gentleman with an income of four hundred crowns. It was a sad affair.

Yet, from the depths of this clouded sky there fitfully peeped a little star which, from time to time, flashed upon the Anguilhems the ephemeral rays of its intermittent light. This fostering star was an inheritance, possible, at least, if not probable. It was the fortune of a distant cousin, a chevalier by the king's grace, a retired captain of a frigate, an old sea-dog, having cruised under Jean Bart, and calling himself by his own name, the Vicomte de Bouzenois.

That modern portrait which hung among the old family portraits in the salon was his.

Occasionally at the château, they talked of this contemporaneous celebrity whose image had come to shed its brilliancy upon those of past celebrities, but they spoke of him with singular reticence. The fact is, his fortune was so great and their hopes so precarious that they regarded any plans which they might found upon it as castles in Spain, chimeras, and dreams. They dared not, then, think seriously of that inheritance, and they were right; but, on occasion, they would remark with certain pride,—

“We have a relative at Versailles, Monsieur de Bouzenois, captain of one of the king's vessels.”

Then, pointing to the picture, they would add, —  
“There is a portrait of him in full uniform.”

Now, all thoughts of the navy which the Baron d’Anguilhem had entertained and which we have disclosed to our readers, had come to him in front of that portrait and had been inspired by that very fortunate relationship.

“After all,” the baron told himself, “the Vicomte de Bouzenois is my distant cousin. I myself am the only relative remaining to him, so that if he were to die intestate I should be his heir; therefore, if I were to ask him for a recommendation in favor of the Chevalier Roger Tanerède, he could not refuse. Now a recommendation from the captain of a frigate would open a naval career for my son, and, that career once open, who knows where the chevalier will stop?”

These ideas of the baron’s were strengthened by the mysterious life of the Vicomte de Bouzenois. Very peculiar stories were circulated as to the source of the colossal fortune that dazzled the eyes of the entire family. Nevertheless, among these stories was one that was considered very probable, and here it is: —

The Vicomte de Bouzenois had at the age of sixteen embarked on the French frigate *Thetis*. He had first achieved glory by cannonading alternately the English and the Dutch; then, finally, during the second war with Flanders, he had himself armed the brig *Porpoise*, and attacked the vessels of the English company coming from Chandernagor, and those of the Dutch Company on their way from Batavia, which services had procured him, in addition to a considerable share of the profits, the rank of captain of the very frigate *Thetis* on which he had formerly embarked. At last the treaty of Nimeguen was signed, and Monsieur

le Vicomte de Bouzenois, as a reward for his good and loyal services, had been appointed governor of a little colony that we then possessed on the Malabar coast.

You know the custom of the wives of the country aforesaid. Our confrère Lemierre who died without having been able to understand why the minister of the navy had not granted him a pension of six thousand livres in recognition of the famous line,

“Neptune’s trident rules the world,” —

our confrère Lemierre, I repeat, has celebrated the custom in a drama of immortal dulness. Now, this custom which, thanks to the philanthropic surveillance of the English, is beginning to fall into disuse, was at that time in full force. It one day happened then that one of the richest and most powerful of the Malabar princes died, and, according to custom, his wife, not yet twenty years old, and as beautiful as the day, announced her fixed purpose of self-immolation upon his pyre.

Monsieur de Bouzenois, who was at that time barely thirty-five years of age, and therefore still young, — Monsieur de Bouzenois, we say, was apprised of her design. As the ex-captain of the frigate *Thetis* had, while the husband was living, more than once cast glances of admiration at her who was to-day a widow, he resolved, if the thing were possible, to prevent the sacrifice which was at hand, and with that intention he repaired to the house of the deceased, where he found the charming widow arraying herself in her most beautiful vestments, perfuming herself with the sweetest odors, beautifying herself, in short, for death, as another would bedeck herself for a fête. He then explained to her the motive of his visit, assuring her that it was a crime

thus unregrettingly to quit life, when a single glance from her could render life so precious to others. He reminded her that, besides being a widow, she was a mother, and that she belonged quite as sacredly to her living son as to her dead husband. In short, he was gallant, tender, eloquent, pathetic, but all in vain. The victim admitted that she was somewhat sorry to quit so young the existence upon which she had barely entered; but she nevertheless persisted in her determination, although it was evident, amidst her obstinate refusals, that she was sacrificing herself less to her love for the dead than to the prejudice of the living, declaring at last, by Vishnu, Siva, and Brahma that she would be forever disgraced if she were weak enough to evade the general custom. It was clear to the eyes of the Vicomte de Bouzenois that the poor widow had no deep predilection for the flames, but was doing the thing because the thing was to be done, because it was the custom, because it was the fashion, in short, and because at any cost, in every country in the world, a woman is bound to follow the fashion.

Thereupon, his mind was made up. He allowed the entire ceremony to proceed, as if it were to be consummated. Then, just as the beautiful widow was bidding adieu to her family, he drew his sword, gave the signal to a group of twenty soldiers whom he had drawn up in line around the funeral pile under the pretext of adding to the solemnity of the scene, and, while a part of the little band scattered the straw, fagots, and other combustible materials, with the other part he carried away the beautiful widow and bore her off to the government palace.

We know not what line of argument the Vicomte de Bouzenois there pursued with the Malabar Venus.

But we do know that by the morrow she had not only renounced the funeral pyre, but she also appeared quite consoled for not having died.

A year later Monsieur de Bouzenois married the widow; and each, it is said, made at marriage a gift of their worldly effects to the survivor. Now the survivor at this date was the Vicomte de Bouzenois, who, as we have before said, thanks to the rupees of the dead beauty, added to his own piastres, possessed the fortune of a nabob.

And, too, in the event of the Vicomte de Bouzenois' dying intestate, the entire fortune would revert to the d'Anguilhems, his nearest relatives, the son of the Malabar woman having, in all probability, been provided for at the time of his mother's marriage.

However, this possibility was too entirely a matter of chance for the family to take it in any way into consideration in their plans for the future of the Chevalier Roger Tancrède.

But, during those long winter evenings when, gathered around a large fireplace, sometimes at one house, sometimes at another, the gentlemen of the neighborhood of the Château d'Anguilhem were rehearsing the exploits of their ancestors or the achievements of their allies, Monsieur de Chemillé, whose great-uncle had been a colonel, talked of the cavalry; Monsieur de Birgarou, whose cousin was a god-daughter of Vauban, talked of sieges; Monsieur Gantry, whose brother-in-law was an excise officer, talked of the revenue, and the Abbé Dubuquoi talked of the Church.

As for the Baron Agénor Palamède d'Anguilhem, thanks to his kinship with the Vicomte de Bouzenois, in the congress where every branch had its proxy, he represented the navy. However, the heroic and the



amorous adventures of the frigate captain shed some lustre upon his relatives at Loches. Glory is not a very productive appanage, as every one knows; but when it comes in default of anything else, it is at least better than nothing.

## II.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WHOM SOME OF THE DAMES OF LOCHES AND ITS VICINITY CALLED HANDSOME ROGER, OTHERS HANDSOME TANCREDÈ, DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD A HEART.

Thus the days — and by the days the nights are understood — rolled on with this good family, without their having settled anything about the future career of the heir, who, during this period of indecision, had attained his fifteenth year, taking things as they came, hunting and riding because it was pleasant, working in his unoccupied moments, pretending that the open air conduced greatly to the development of his thoughts, and, when he was in the open air, thinking little but whistling much.

What is more, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède, who was the terror of hares and deer, had never yet even thought of pursuing a shepherdess. He had received, it is true, a great fund of sensibility from his mother, but at Anguilhem nothing had as yet developed the germs. Much exercise, a few novels, and almost no opportunities for falling in love comprised his mode of life.

However, one opportunity presented itself. Let us relate how eagerly the Chevalier Roger Tancrède seized it by the forelock.

The baron and the baroness gave a grand supper at Easter. In those days, Easter was an occasion for reunions, and all the nobility of the neighborhood for

six leagues around was bidden to the Château d'Anguilhem. After having performed for his mother the usual services pertaining to his department, and which we have already detailed, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède made a conspicuous toilet and entered the salon where the guests were already assembled.

The conversation turned upon the wood-cutting, the recent sowing, the next hunt; and, as these three topics were essentially interesting to country gentlemen, not very much attention was paid to the prolonged belatedness of one of the guests; and that guest was the Vicomte de Beuzerie, known throughout the entire province for being so punctual that his punctuality had become proverbial. Yet, as eight o'clock had just struck, and the invitations had fixed the dinner hour at half-past seven precisely, the stomachs began to protest, and their owners at the same time asked each other in low tones what could have become of the delinquent.

The question was the less unseemly, since from the moment the appointed hour had struck, the baron was seen anxiously watching the progress of the clock, and the baroness, having been called two or three times to the door of the salon to know if the dinner should not be served, had answered aloud, —

“Have a little patience, Catherine. Monsieur de Beuzerie cannot now be long in coming.”

The clock pointed to a quarter past eight; evidently, only an accident could have delayed Monsieur de Beuzerie. Hence the Baroness d'Anguilhem began to feel greatly concerned about the viscountess, with whom she was rather friendly, and her daughter Mademoiselle Constance, who had returned from the convent to spend Easter week with her family, and who was to accompany her esteemed parents to Anguilhem.

The baron therefore directed the Chevalier Roger Tancrède to saddle Christopher and reconnoitre the road toward Beuzerie. If the young man returned in an hour without having discovered anything, they would sit down to the table, whatever might come of it.

Roger Tancrède accepted the mission without urging. He was one of those light-hearted lads that are always ready for anything. He buttoned on a pair of long gaiters over his silk hose, saddled Christopher, who was a good animal of three or four years, jumped on his back, gathered up the reins, and, thanks to a holly switch with which he had supplied himself, and which was to take the place of the missing spurs, he succeeded in urging the peaceful creature into a gallop.

The night was fine enough for a poet. The pale moon, buried in great, cushiony clouds, the sharp north wind whistling through the yet leafless branches, the hooting of the night birds, all would have delighted René, Werther, or Hamlet; but Roger was little moved by these nocturnal influences; besides, Roger was very hungry, and when Roger was hungry there was not much under the sun, with the exception of a well-laden table, that he judged worthy of attention. And so he fumed as he galloped along, wishing unpunctual people at the devil, certain that, owing to the delay, the ragouts would stick to the saucepans, and the filet would be burned, and that the entire blame was due to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, who, doubtless, was keeping her parents waiting while she perfected her toilet. And, indulging in these reflections, the young messenger kept lashing Christopher who, accustomed even with the chevalier to a more moderate gait, galloped harder than ever, spouting steam from his nostrils like the phantom steed of the lover of Lenore.

But, although Roger Tancredè continued to advance, he still saw nothing save the shadows of the clouds as they floated across the moon and, for the moment, obscured his path as with a dark veil. He stopped to listen from time to time, and heard only the rushing of the wind through the trees; then, with a sigh, he would turn his head toward Anguilhem, where he could see in the distance through the branches the brilliantly lighted windows of the château. At that sight, he felt sorely tempted to draw rein and return, saying that he had seen nothing; but he reflected that it was not even ten minutes since he had started out, and that his father had told him to search for an hour. Thereupon he again plucked up courage, and again whipped up Christopher and set off at a gallop, to the great amazement of the poor beast who, ordinarily serving as the baron's mount, was with him in the habit of taking a gait that was infinitely more sedate.

Suddenly Roger thought he heard a cry of distress two or three hundred paces in advance; at the cry, the horse stopped of his own accord, sniffing the air noisily with his smoking nostrils. The chevalier looked about him. He was in a hollow, lonely and boggy, on a narrow roadway beside some deep clay-pits. The cry was dismal, the night uncanny; Roger shuddered.

However, we must say to the credit of the heir of the name and title of d'Anguilhem, the sentiment of fear experienced by the chevalier was short-lived, and was instantly gone upon the reflection that he must be of service to those who had uttered that appeal for help. He again urged Christopher into a gallop, shouting at the top of his voice, —

“Ho! where are you? who called?”

“This way, this way!” answered a voice, nearer than

before, and seeming to issue from the depths of the earth.

"On which side?" demanded Roger, still advancing.

"To the left of the road, in the marl-pit; this way farther, — here, just under where you now are."

Roger pulled up Christopher and peered through the darkness which had become thicker from the disappearance of the moon behind the clouds. He thought he could descry something moving fifteen feet below him.

"Can it be you, Monsieur de Beuzerie?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, it is I, chevalier," returned the voice; "in heaven's name get us out of this. Our carriage went over in going too near the edge, and we are sunken in the marl."

"Help, Monsieur Roger!" cried a woman's voice.

"Help!" repeated the voice of a girl.

"Ah! poor Monsieur de Beuzerie!" cried Roger; "wait, wait, I will come."

And he leaped down from Christopher. Then he heard a frightful ado, which the trampling of his own horse had until then prevented his hearing, and which, upon Christopher's halt, now distinctly reached his ear. A horse was splashing about in the muddy water of the pit into which he was plunged up to the stomach. The old coach, as Monsieur de Beuzerie said, had slipped from the road-way down the embankment and fallen quite flat; but, thanks to the depth of the box and the softness of the mud, the fall had injured no one.

Madame de Beuzerie had at first thought proper to faint away, but at Roger's voice, she had come to herself again. As for her daughter Constance, she had borne the fall with great courage. Of course Monsieur de Beuzerie, who was unhurt, had entertained fears only for his wife and daughter.

Believing no time was to be lost, the Chevalier Roger Tancredi slid down the declivity until he reached the coach. He then called on the coachman to come to his assistance; but the coachman had gone in search of help in the neighborhood, and he called in vain. The young man then resolved alone to extricate Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle de Beuzerie; the merit would be the greater. Consequently, he began by opening the door and releasing Mademoiselle Constance de Beuzerie, whom her mother held out to him like the mother who, in the picture of the flood, holds her child above the waters. Roger took Mademoiselle de Beuzerie and deposited her upon the bank as easily as if she had been a bird. Then came the turn of the viscountess; this was a more difficult matter. The viscountess was what in the provinces is styled a fine woman, that is, she was a plump matron, very attractive still, of five feet one inch in height, fat in proportion, weighing, perhaps, one hundred and sixty or one hundred and seventy pounds. However, mustering all his strength, Roger succeeded in pulling her up, while the viscount aided from below, and, in a few seconds, he had her deposited safe and sound beside her daughter.

There remained Monsieur de Beuzerie, who was far from presenting the same difficulties as his wife. A tall, spare man, still lusty and active, he was out of his coach in a twinkling, and, without Roger's help, sprang up the bank, where he joined the rest of his family.

Roger, for whom there was nothing more to do at the coach, immediately followed Monsieur de Beuzerie, with whom he exchanged many compliments, while the two ladies overwhelmed him with thanks and courtesies.

And still the coachman had not returned. They called him in vain; their shouts were wasted on soli-

tude, and only the screech-owls and the hoot-owls answered, as if in mockery of the poor travellers.

Roger, whose stomach grew more and more famished, increasing his impatience, suggested that they should not wait for the coachman, who in all likelihood would return quite alone; and he began to unhitch the mired horse, which, in a trice, was on the bank only a few steps distant from his masters.

The only question now was how to reach the château. This matter, which at first sight appeared very simple, was, in reality, complicated by circumstances, as we shall see. There were two horses for accomplishing the undertaking; as for the coach, it was not to be thought of. It would take seven or eight men to set it, not to say, on its feet, but on its wheels. There were, then, two horses, we repeat; but one of the two was covered with mud. Roger first proposed to Monsieur de Beuzerie that he himself should lead Christopher by the bridle, while the viscountess and her daughter should mount his back, and that Monsieur de Beuzerie should bestride his own horse. But Christopher, still quite excited by his race, whinneying and pawing the earth, seemed to the two ladies to be a little too restive, and the proposition was rejected.

Roger next suggested riding with Madame de Beuzerie upon Christopher, for whom he would answer when he himself was on his back, while the viscount and his daughter should ride the other horse. But, as we have said, the other horse was covered with mud, and the viscountess whispered to her husband that if that plan were adopted, Constance would spoil her lovely new gown of pekin. Hence that plan was rejected like the first.

Finally it was decided that Madame de Beuzerie,



having less at stake on account of her gown than Mademoiselle Constance, should with her husband mount the coach horse, upon whose back they placed Christopher's saddle, while the Chevalier Roger Tancrède, who was a perfect horseman, should mount Christopher bareback and take Mademoiselle Constance up behind him.

They proceeded to put into execution this plan which was yet to receive a slight modification. Monsieur de Beuzerie mounted the horse first; then Roger lifted Madame de Beuzerie and established her in majesty behind her spouse. Thus far, all worked like a charm; but, having reached this point, the remainder of the plan presented a little difficulty.

If Roger Tancrède got on the horse first, Mademoiselle Constance would in that case have no one to help her mount behind him; while, on the other hand, if the Chevalier Roger Tancrède first placed Mademoiselle Constance behind, then he in turn could not mount the horse except by executing some extravagant gymnastic feat, throwing his leg over Christopher's head instead of his tail. They searched on all sides for a bank, a mile-stone, a fallen tree; there was nothing. At last, his famished stomach spurring him on, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède devised a plan: it was that he should mount behind Mademoiselle Constance, whom he would then clasp in his arms instead of being clasped in hers. Such a course was doubtless somewhat unconventional, and at the proposition the father and mother both knit their brows; but the viscountess inclined to the viscount's ear and whispered, —

"Never mind, my dear! it must be done, and, after all, they are but two children."

"Mount, then, as you will," said Monsieur de Beuzerie, "for indeed we must proceed."

"Mademoiselle, allow me?" said Roger.

And like a feather he lifted up the slight little sylph called Mademoiselle Constance, and was almost as soon on the crupper behind her.

Mademoiselle Constance uttered a pretty little shriek, very terrified, but not very terrifying, to which the viscount, full of parental and prudish fears, responded with, "What is the matter?"

"Nothing, monsieur, nothing," returned Roger. "Just as I sprang up, mademoiselle lost her balance; now I have her in my arms and there is no danger."

"In your arms, *morbleu!* your arms!" muttered the viscount.

"Hush, my dear," remonstrated the viscountess, "you will put ideas into the children's heads that certainly are not there now."

"Let us say no more," said the viscount.

And he applied his heels to such purpose that his horse set off at a gentle trot. Christopher followed on behind.

However, let us hasten to say that the viscount's fears, if exaggerated, were not without foundation. Scarcely had the Chevalier Tancrède felt Mademoiselle Constance leaning against his heart, before his heart began to throb as it had never yet throbbed. For her part, the young girl, who, reared in a convent until then, was riding a horse for the first time, trembled with fear, and, whether she herself was experiencing an unknown pleasure, or whether, indeed, in her primitive innocence fear really triumphed over conventionalism, she clasped to her breast the hand with which the young man was holding her, turning from time to time to appeal to him, —

"Oh! Monsieur le Chevalier, hold me more firmly,

more firmly still! Oh! Monsieur le Chevalier, I am so afraid! Oh! Monsieur le Chevalier, I am going to fall — ”

And every time that she turned, her fair locks brushed the young man's face, her beautiful eyes met his, her sweet breath mingled with his, with the result that poor Roger forgot his increasing hunger, and he would have had the journey last forever, he felt such a strange sense of comfort, such unknown pleasure, such inexplicable delight stealing through all his being, such expansion of bosom. Every sighing tree, every moonbeam as it gently caressed him seemed breathing in his ear, “ Are you not happy, Roger ? ”

Yes, the chevalier was happy, and, without knowing why, Mademoiselle Constance also was happy. In her fear there was a charming little intermixture of pleasure for which she did not account, although she told herself that she had never been so agreeably frightened, and that fear was a sensation full of delicious emotions, in short, a misjudged thing until then, and, consequently, calumniated like all misjudged things.

It was while enjoying this happiness, ill-defined in their minds but profoundly appreciated in their hearts, that the two young people reached the Château d'Anguilhem. The horses' hoofs had been heard by all the guests. A famished stomach has no ears, it is said. Strange mistake! A famished stomach is, on the contrary, all ears, and very sharp ears at that. Everybody ran out to the steps, and the viscount, the viscountess, Mademoiselle Constance, and Roger were received with a blaze of torches, not unlike sovereigns returning to their own dominions, and for whom the royal residence has been illuminated.

The baron extended his arms to the viscountess, who,

thanks to their support, decorously reached the ground. The viscount solemnly dismounted as if to beat of drum, as a horseman ought to dismount. As for Roger, he made but one bound, took Mademoiselle Constance under the arms with both hands, lifted her like a feather, and set her gently on the ground, so gently that not even a sound was heard as the girl's two little feet met the flags. Then it was, by the light of the torches, that Roger first had a good look at Constance, whom thus far he had but guessed at. What of Constance? Ravishing blue eyes, blonde hair that looked like fluffs of silk, a mouth like a cherry, a neck like a swan's, a sylph-like form,—such was Mademoiselle de Beuzerie. A cloud of flame swept before Roger's eyes, and he felt as if he should die of joy.

Without daring to offer his hand, he followed Mademoiselle Constance, who, as soon as she was free from Christopher, had blushing executed a pretty convent courtesy before her cavalier and gone with her mother; but, strange to say, already his heart, so happy and full a moment ago, was seized with a stricture. It seemed as if the young girl were lost to him. And Roger, poor Roger, the young man whose robust appetite had become proverbial, sat down to the table without the least desire to eat.

However, a great triumph awaited Roger. Their clamorous hunger had immediately assembled the guests in the dining-room; but the first course was barely removed before conversation, in subjection, at first, to their appetites, began to rise in the shape of interrogations. They asked the cause of Monsieur de Beuzerie's delay, and inquired why that worthy gentleman, who should have come in his carriage, had arrived on horseback instead.

Then Monsieur de Beuzerie detailed the whole adventure, presented the Chevalier Roger Tancrède as his rescuer, extolled his zeal and the judgment displayed by him, notwithstanding his youth. The eulogies of Madame de Beuzerie surpassed those of her husband. Mademoiselle Constance alone said nothing, but she blushed furiously and cast a shy glance at Roger. Roger, who had not for an instant taken his eyes from her, remarked the blush and intercepted the glance; and, without knowing why, he felt that look and blush did him good. No other subject was discussed during the dinner, and by dessert, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède was regarded by the guests as the deliverer of the whole family in general, and of Mademoiselle Constance in particular.

Mademoiselle Constance and the Chevalier Roger Tancrède were therefore fêted as the two prodigies of the evening, and fêted in the manner of that happy time of politeness and good fellowship. Indeed, in those days, it seemed as if all wished to make life smooth and pleasant for the novices who were just setting foot upon society's threshold. Women made advances to the school-boy still in the hands of his tutor. Men strove to please heiresses yet captive behind the gratings of their convents. They came from school-room or college, the young men to talk of love, and the maidens to hear it talked of.

Those were happy days, when the lads had not yet taken it into their heads to talk politics while spinning their tops, and girls did not dream of discussing ethics while dressing and undressing their dolls.

In the depths of his heart, Monsieur d'Anguilhem was delighted at the importance with which the adventure of the marsh was investing his son. Above all, in

his plans for the future, the baron was seeking an establishment for his son, and Mademoiselle Constance, who at the death of her father and mother would inherit an income of six thousand francs, was in every way a suitable match for the chevalier. Beuzerie and Anguilhem could then be united by purchasing three or four leagues of marsh which could be had for little, delightful hunting-grounds, but which were otherwise perfectly useless, and two or three small pieces of woodland lying between them here and there; and all together would form one of the noblest baronies of Touraine. The children born of that marriage would thus own valley and mountain as their ancestors had owned them at the height of their prosperity. That would be a fine thing; it would be grand, magnificent. The worthy baron was in high good humor throughout the meal, and he sang at dessert.

But, very different from the baron, and as if he must have divined the plans of that ambitious father, Monsieur de Beuzerie, who had at first seated himself at the table with an air of imposing dignity, drew himself up more and more as the dinner neared its close, signing to his wife that she, too, should assume the defensive, a manoeuvre which the vicountess executed, it should be added, with a conjugal understanding worthy of the highest eulogy. More than that: as the young people had been placed side by side, and as, instead of eating as became children of from twelve to fifteen years, they talked in the low tones that lovers might have used, Monsieur and Madame de Beuzerie overwhelmed their daughter with threatening glances, to which at first Constance paid no attention, occupied as she was with something else; but they at last took effect, throwing the girl into a state of anguish, the more

poignant owing to her utter ignorance of the cause of her parents' wrath.

And so, no sooner were they risen from table than Madame de Beuzerie took her daughter by the hand and made her sit beside her, while Monsieur de Beuzerie, after announcing that he wished to get home the same night, set out to learn something about his coach.

Monsieur de Beuzerie came back in despair. His coachman had returned dead-drunk, and the coach was still daintily embedded in the marsh; then, as politeness very naturally demanded, the baron and the baroness offered their neighbors a room in the château. But this proposition, which, moreover, was nothing unusual, Monsieur de Beuzerie so promptly negatived that the baron was forced to pass on to another suggestion. This was to put the viscount's horse to the baron's cart; by this means, Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle de Beuzerie could regain their own château that evening, as they seemed so desirous of doing. The next morning, Monsieur d'Anguilhem's people would extricate the coach from the marsh, hitch Christopher to it, and Christopher should take the coach to Beuzerie and bring back the cart.

This plan was enthusiastically approved by the viscountess and the viscount, to the great despair of Mademoiselle Constance and the Chevalier Roger Tancrede, between whom a poor little tearful glance was exchanged for a stifled sigh, an interchange which, happily, was not surprised by the girl's inflexible parents. A quarter of an hour after the matter had been decided, it was announced that the viscount's horse had been put to the baron's cart.

They must go then. The poor children had seen each other two hours ago for the first time, but it seemed to

them that they had known each other from infancy. The baron and the viscount shook hands; Madame d'Anguilhem and Madame de Beuzerie embraced; Constance made a beautiful courtesy to all the company, and cast a very sorrowful glance at the Chevalier Roger Tancredi. Then all three got into the cart, the horse set off, and then followed the diminishing sound of wheels and bells, and soon the sound died quite away.

Roger did not return to the salon with the rest of the company. Roger had remained at the threshold of the house-door; from the threshold of the house-door he had run to the court-gate, and there he had stood, sad and motionless, his eyes fixed on the vanishing cart, in which direction he kept on gazing even long after it had disappeared from sight. Doubtless he would have been found there the next morning had he not felt a touch upon his shoulder. It was his tutor, Abbé Dubuquoi, who came to say that a longer absence from the salon would be considered rude by the remaining guests. Roger furtively brushed away two great tears that were falling from his eyes, and followed his instructor.



## III.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM, DISCOVERING  
THAT HE HAD A HEART, WISHED TO BE ASSURED  
THAT MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE ALSO HAD ONE.

It was lucky for the Chevalier Tancrede that they did not keep late hours in those days at Easter. At midnight all the guests dispersed, some, and they were the nearest neighbors, to return to their manors, either afoot or on horseback; others, who lived at a distance, to retire to the apartments which, in the fulness of their ancient hospitality, the baron and the baroness had placed at their disposal.

Before ascending to his bed-chamber, Roger went as usual to embrace his father and his mother, who exchanged smiles; then he bowed to the abbé and in turn retired, but not to sleep. He felt not the least inclined toward sleep; sleep had abandoned him like his appetite; he but thought of Mademoiselle de Beuzerie.

It was the first time that the chevalier had given thought to anything but a hunting party, or a horse-race, or a fencing-match, or an ingenious subterfuge for getting off from a recitation of his Sallust or Virgil.

Roger was profoundly sad. He had comprehended that the only aim of that hurried departure had been to take Constance away from him; but he had read in the young maid's eyes that she would have been very glad to remain near him, and it comforted him. Besides, there is something which weighs upon the heart so sweetly

in the early sorrows of a first love, that they are accepted as sensations greatly to be preferred to the indifference that has given place to them. What we desire above all things is not exactly to be happy, — we do not know yet what happiness is, — but to avoid a return to that arid desert whence we have come, to remain in the soft sunlight under the beautiful green trees, among the intoxicating odors of the flowers, whose thorns have already lacerated our fingers; but, for all that, how we love to pluck them, whatever the risk, how essential to breathe their perfume! We prefer tempest to calm, suffering to lack of joy.

Roger went to sleep late, and he slept feverishly, which did not interfere with his waking at daybreak, refreshed, rested, and bright-eyed. What is more, he had planned a little scheme of his own. He would himself take back the coach with Christopher under pretext of asking in the name of his father and mother after the Beuzerie family, to whom, in view of the advanced hour of the night when they had left the château, the baron and the baroness might be supposed to fear that some accident had happened. In addition, he had conceived an idea that rendered such a course quite natural. He would give the coachman a crown to counterfeit illness and declare that he did not feel equal to going to Beuzerie.

The chevalier, who knew where the coach was, directed the gamekeeper and the stable-boy, and these, with the help of the gardener, the farmer, and three or four of his plough-boys, succeeded by means of ropes and strength of arms in hoisting the coach to the roadway. Happily, the solidity of the old coach preserved it from damage, and once righted, it made no objection to wheeling toward Beuzerie. As for Christopher, under

the stimulus of repeated cuts of the whip from his young master, he set off at a full trot, kicking and whinneying by way of protest that he failed to understand the manner in which he was driven since the night before.

But, as Roger drew near Beuzerie, his urgency, as regards Christopher, became less pressing, and, profiting by the cessation of blows, the intelligent animal came down from the full trot to a jog, and from the jog-trot to a walk. In fact, what had at first seemed a very simple thing to the young man, this matter of taking the viscount his coach and getting the paternal cart in exchange, now looked to him like monstrous audacity. He recalled Monsieur de Beuzerie's severity of countenance, his frown, his curt accents, and, more than all, his precipitate departure, and he asked himself whether the master of Beuzerie, who had been in such haste to leave the Château d'Anguilhem, would experience a high degree of pleasure on seeing the heir of that château at the Château de Beuzerie. All these reflections gave little assurance to the Chevalier Roger Tancrede, who, among the excellent qualities with which heaven had endowed him, had not received that happy impudence which is the card most sure to win; not only then had he ceased urging Christopher forward, but, what is more, had the horse stopped or turned round, it is probable that his master would not have had the courage to start him on again or turn him back; fortunately, this did not happen. Christopher was an honest creature incapable of such performances. He did not like to be overdriven, that is all, but, when left to decide for himself, he set to work with a provincial conscience, which could be relied on with perfect confidence. Hence he continued to plod on at his ordinary pace toward Beuzerie, and very soon Roger descried the little château's two

slate-roofed towers that lifted their creaking weather-vanes above the trees of the park.

Roger still continued to advance, but, it must be said, he was no longer forcing Christopher to go; it was Christopher that forced him. And so, on he went, overwhelmed with profoundest misgivings as to the reception with which he would meet, when, suddenly, at one of the tower windows there appeared a small blonde head looking in his direction with wide-open, beautiful blue eyes, while the hand that obeyed the head was waving a handkerchief as a token that the new-comer was recognized. At that sight Roger drew up Christopher, and the two beautiful children began to exchange all the signs of simple affection that their hearts, winging their way to each other, were able to suggest.

This had lasted for ten minutes, and probably would have lasted till night, had not Roger seen a second person rise behind Constance. The untimely interrupter was no other than Madame de Beuzerie, who, passing through the corridor and seeing her daughter, who had imprudently left the door of her room wide open, making unusual signals from the window, had been curious to know to whom the signals were directed. Madame de Beuzerie, who, on the evening before, had chided her husband for being too ready to take alarm, and for insisting upon their leaving the château so early, now recognized Roger, and began to think that the fancies which the viscount had taken into his head were not quite so silly as she had at first believed.

Being discovered, Roger saw that there was no drawing back; he brought the whip down upon Christopher, who, not expecting anything of the kind, set off at a

run, and entered the court of the Château de Beuzerie at a high rate of speed.

The first person that Roger saw was the viscount, who was returning from his morning walk in the park. Roger thought that the moment had arrived when he must pay for his audacity. He sprang to the ground, advanced toward Monsieur de Beuzerie, and announced very deliberately, for a man who was serving his apprenticeship in lying, that, his coachman having felt quite indisposed, he had taken it upon himself to bring the coach to Beuzerie, fearing, in the first place, that the viscount might have need of it, and secondly, desiring to learn, on behalf of the baron and the baroness, whether any accident had happened to their good neighbors when returning.

As these two motives were certainly most plausible, the viscount was forced to accept them, although he very clearly divined the true prompting of the young man's visit. He therefore feigned to believe implicitly all that the other had said, inquired in return after the health of the baron and the baroness, and as it was the dinner hour, and they were about to sit down to table, he even extended his courtesy so far as to invite his officious neighbor to share pot-luck. It is to be imagined that Roger gratefully accepted.

To put them to a second proof was what tempted the viscount to this step. He might, take it altogether, have been deceived the night before, and he wished to observe the two children again. Alas! the poor young hearts did not yet know how to feign. Upon entering the salon, Constance blushed as if she had been fifteen years old, and Roger turned as pale as if he had been eighteen. Monsieur de Beuzerie remarked upon the two young people an opposite effect, which however sprang

from the same source, and his wavering suspicions were fully established.

During the dinner Constance and Roger committed imprudence after imprudence; but on this occasion, instead of frowning, as on the previous evening, Monsieur de Beuzerie overlooked them, and contented himself with conveying to his wife signals which meant, —

“ Well, was I such a visionary as you said? Is it clear now? is it clear?”

Indeed, it was so clear that at the end of dinner, in order to deprive Roger, doubtless, of all thought of revisiting the château, Monsieur de Beuzerie carelessly announced that Constance was returning that same afternoon to the convent. At this news, Constance uttered a cry, and Roger, seeing her turn so pale, and thinking that she was about to be ill, rushed toward her; but the viscount gently detained him with the remark that Madame de Beuzerie was present, and that, if her daughter was in need of assistance, she would give it to her.

But Constance was not at the fainting age. The poor little thing was too simple for that; she was contented to dissolve into tears, seeing which, Roger had need of all his self-possession to repress his own. Moreover, those untimely tears occasioned something very sad for the two children. Constance received orders to go to her room. Sobbing the while, she dropped a little courtesy to Roger, who acknowledged it by one of the most pathetic of bows; after which, as there was nothing more to detain him at the château, he begged to take leave of the viscount. One would have said that the viscount had foreseen that hurried departure, for, on arriving at the court-steps, Roger found Christopher there already harnessed to the cart. He thereupon saluted the viscount who shook hands with him most amiably, charged him

in turn with many compliments to the baron and the baroness, and completed his civilities by wishing him a pleasant drive.

As one can easily understand, Roger did not pass under the little window of the tower without an upward glance. Good luck willed that just then the viscountess, believing Roger to be still in the salon chanced to leave her daughter's room. Free for a moment, Constance had hastened to the window; she saw Roger. To the chevalier's great bewilderment, the maiden's face was radiant. The youth was about to ask of the beautiful child the cause of her unlooked for joy, when she exhibited a pencil and a bit of paper. Roger comprehended that Constance was about to write to him, and he stopped. In fact, after a moment's delay, both paper and pencil fell at his feet.

On the paper were these four lines: —

"Mamma, who is very fond of me, has just confessed that they said before you that I was to leave for the convent this afternoon so that you would not return here again. The truth is that I shall not go until next Sunday.

"CONSTANCE."

Since a pencil was thrown to him, Roger understood that he might respond; he tore off a scrap of the paper, and wrote in return: —

"Walk in the park to-morrow morning, near the arbor. I will come over the wall, and we will together plan some means of seeing each other again. I do not know whether you would feel such grief as I, but I do know that I shall die if I am kept away from you.

"ROGER."

Then he wrapped a pebble in this note, which, as we see, was somewhat precocious for a lover who was not

yet fifteen years of age; then, with a school-boy's precision of aim, he threw the pebble into Constance's room. Constance sprang back to pick it up, and reappeared skipping with joy, and nodding in assent that she would be at the rendezvous. To remain longer would have been imprudent; so, his heart inflated with happiness, Roger interrupted Christopher's meditations with a cut of the whip. Three hours later, the young man had returned to Anguilhem.

The baron and the baroness glanced at each other, and exchanged a smile on witnessing the joy that overflowed their son's heart and appeared at his eyes, in his speech, in his movements. Never had Roger been so obliging; he dried the china, polished the silver, cleaned the baron's gun, and recited to the Abbé Dubuquoi the entire episode of the love of Dido and Æneas.

The day dragged with Roger, but it seemed to him that by keeping himself in motion he might hasten the hours. He went, he came, here and there, upstairs and downstairs, looked at all the clocks, and hurried the supper as if he were hungry. He sat down to the table and ate nothing; and, with eyes more wide-awake than they had ever been, he retired to his room, saying that he was almost asleep.

As we well know, it was not because he was sleepy that Roger went to his room; he had to tell his love to the moon, to the breeze, the trees, the stars, the clouds. He opened his window and the monologue began.

Roger passed a happy night.

At daybreak Roger descended the stairs; no one in the château had yet risen. He called out to the housekeeper that he was going for a ride to Saint Hippolyte. That was in the direction opposite to Beuzerie. Poor



Roger thought himself obliged to lie, even to a servant. Then, having taken this precaution, which, at least, was evidence that indiscretion was not one of Roger's faults, the young man saddled Christopher and set off at full speed.

This time the poor animal attempted no resistance; besides, as a precautionary measure, Roger had re-enforced himself with a pair of spurs and a riding-whip. Christopher feeling the spurs, and having seen the riding-whip, had very quickly comprehended that, if he attempted to make any resistance, he would fare but ill.

Upon rising, the baron learned from the housekeeper that his son had gone for a ride to Saint Hippolyte. He did not believe a word of it, very naturally, nor did the baroness.

At eleven o'clock the Abbé Dubuquoi, who, from the time he had risen, had kept inquiring of every one for news of his pupil, went to inquire of his parents. The baron and the baroness began significantly to smile, and Monsieur d'Anguilhem said, with a bantering shake of the head as he placed his hand on the tutor's shoulder, —

"Ah! abbé, abbé! you have made a good-for-nothing of your pupil."

The baron had not lost sight of his dearest project, which was to reunite Anguilhem and Beuzerie. As for the baroness, she murmured, —

"Really, Constance is a charming child, and I should be very happy to call her my daughter."

"At all events," responded the Abbé Dubuquoi, "the wedding will not take place, I hope, until my pupil has finished his studies."

The baron and the baroness began to laugh a little at themselves, and more at the abbé. Indeed, such

schemes concerning a lad of fifteen and a little girl of twelve were, even in the eyes of their projectors, too foolish to be entertained by the judgment. The baron therefore was the first to drop the subject by saying, —

“Time will tell; let it work and we will talk of something else.”

And they talked of Monsieur de Bouzenois. The morning slipped by without Roger's being seen again. But, about two o'clock in the afternoon, just as they were sitting down to dinner, he entered the room, sheepish, crestfallen, and red-eyed. The baron cast at the baroness a meaning glance that said, —

“*Diable! diable!* the matter does not seem to be running on wheels.”

The chevalier took his place at the table, but he did not eat, which with him was a sign of great preoccupation. Then, after dinner, he sat a while beside his mother; he rearranged his private library, which consisted of thirty volumes, taken from the library of the château; he loitered behind the baron as the latter made his rounds of the kitchen-garden; he returned, still silent; and he at last interrupted his silence only to complain of a violent headache, and request that he might withdraw early, a request which, we may readily suppose, was granted unconditionally.

But, after returning to his room, Roger forgot that his apartment was situated directly above his mother's, that every one of his movements was betrayed by the creaking floor. All night long he walked his room, like the *malade imaginaire*, back and forth and up and down. Not a step was lost to the baron and the baroness.

“There is always hope left to every devil,” said the baron; “but we are worsted by Beuzerie.”

The next morning the baron himself went out to the

stable and found Christopher strutting before his rack. He returned through the kitchen with an upward glance; the three guns were above the high mantel. Roger had not gone out. Roger was asleep. At Roger's age, however troubled one may be, nature is exacting; one must sleep and eat.

So Roger slept until nine o'clock; at nine o'clock he descended to breakfast, his eyes swollen and his cheeks pale. Poor boy! yet he had slept two hours longer than on the preceding night. There is a great difference between the sleeplessness of joy and that of sorrow.

However, Roger ate; but, while he was eating, the dining-room door opened, and Monsieur de Beuzerie's valet appeared with a letter in his hand. The chevalier recognized Comtois, grew red and turned pale alternately; then, observing that the valet was approaching his father, he arose from the table, and ran to shut himself within his room.

In spite of his philosophical pretensions, a cold chill ran over the Baron d'Anguilhem as he opened the despatch, whose contents he could surmise. What is more, Comtois had assumed his serious air and majestic bearing. Now, neither the one nor the other augured any good; one always guesses at the message by the messenger's face. However, the baron transferred his eyes from Comtois' visage to the viscount's letter, and read as follows:—

*"Monsieur and dear Neighbor,—* This is to tender our best wishes for your welfare and to present the very humble compliments of Madame de Beuzerie and myself to you and Madame la Baronne. We are sorry to have something of a disagreeable nature to communicate with regard to your son, Monsieur le Chevalier Roger Tancred, whom I surprised yesterday in a secluded quarter of the park on his

knees to our daughter, Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, whose hands he was kissing with an ardor rather excessive in a school-boy of fifteen. You well know, monsieur, my dear neighbor, that it is very painful for us to enter such a complaint against a son whose father and mother we love so much, and, also, that we must regard with disfavor his pursuit of our daughter, by which we are no doubt honored, but which seems to us not only very precocious, as she is scarcely thirteen, but very ill-advised as well, in that it is conducted without your consent. We regret to be compelled to say that it would be a source of great uneasiness to us should Monsieur le Chevalier Roger Tancrède come again to Beuzerie, but we count upon your friendship and your good advice to bring him to reason; for, in short, our daughter is ill of the affair and of the cold she has undoubtedly taken. However, in view of the pressing necessity, her illness does not prevent her leaving for the convent this evening.

"Adieu, monsieur and dear friend. Believe in our sincere desire to please you, and in our lively regret at having been forced to enter such complaints.

"DE BEUZERIE.

"The seventeenth day of April, 1708."

That the letter almost dropped from the baron's hands did not prevent his ringing for the housekeeper to have Comtois taken to the pantry, there to be well treated and regaled with the very best. He then answered the viscount's letter, promising to call and make, on behalf of the chevalier, due apologies both to him and to Madame de Beuzerie.

Warmed up by the welcome that he had received, and which he was far from expecting of the baron's courtesy, Comtois told the cook, while drinking his bottle of Orléans, that Mademoiselle Constance seemed greatly grieved and wept aloud. In the wake of this confidence

there followed almost as much sorrow at Anguilhem as there was grief at Beuzerie. In his quality of only son, Roger Tancrède was not only adored by the baron and the baroness, but also by all the retainers of the château; and most assuredly, if theirs had still been the days when similar suits were adjudged by lance and sword, the baron might without resistance have armed his ten vassals to go and carry off the young châtelaine who had been refused to his son.

Comtois having departed, the chevalier was sent for. The baron admonished him with a few very paternal and very mild reproaches concerning the precociousness of his amorous inclinations, and on the propriety of finishing his studies, at least, before thinking of marriage. Then the baroness added that when the time came for such thoughts, it would be quite as well that the chevalier should not cast his eyes on very wealthy heiresses, presumption that might bring upon his parents the humiliation of a refusal.

Stung to the quick, Roger replied that there had been a mistake, that he was not in love with Mademoiselle Constance, that he had never thought of marriage, nor had he for a moment entertained any desire other than to please his tutor, Monsieur l'Abbé Dubuquoi; that, as for his mother's anxiety about his aiming his addresses at too lofty a mark, her fear was entirely chimerical, since he was firmly resolved to remain a bachelor. Poor child! he did not suspect that the greatest danger to be encountered in his life would arise, perhaps, from polygamy, a hanging offence!

There was so much of wounded pride in the chevalier's denial, that both father and mother respected his falsehood. Consequently, the baron gave him his hand, his mother kissed him, and, in accordance with the de-

sire that he had expressed, he was sent to his tutor who, instead of the loves of Dido and Æneas, made him repeat a chapter on the contempt of riches. Poor Roger was decidedly unfortunate, both as lover and as student. As a lover, he had fallen from Mademoiselle Constance to Monsieur de Beuzerie, and as a student, from Virgil to Seneca.

The chevalier had no sooner left his presence than the baron made a very grand toilet, and proceeded to Beuzerie to pay the promised visit. He was received with an air of constraint by the viscount and the viscountess, who attributed their embarrassment to the preparations for their daughter's return to her convent. The baron asked to see Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, a request which could not be refused. Constance entered with eyes so red and swollen that Monsieur d'Anguilhem discerned that this time the departure was not in the least a pretence. The baron then spoke very courteously of the chevalier's unpardonable folly, ascribing all the impropriety of his conduct to youthful ignorance and thoughtlessness, adding, finally, that the poor boy had bitterly repented it, and that he begged his neighbors, and especially his fair young neighbor, to forget all that had occurred within the last three days; thereupon Constance became as pale as death, and feeling that she was about to burst into tears, fled from the salon.

The baron had made up his mind as to the young maid's feelings. She loved the chevalier deeply, and his eye had penetrated to the very depths of the virgin heart of the heiress of Beuzerie; the parents remained to be sounded in their turn. This was not a difficult matter. The viscount himself turned the conversation upon a certain Marquis de Croisey who lived with his parents in Loches, and enjoyed an income of something

like three hundred louis. For a long time there had been a fair understanding between the two families, and he added even that so great importance had been attached to what had just passed only because the affair might prove an obstacle in the eyes of that gentleman.

The baron felt the indirect thrust aimed at himself, and, as we have said, being a master hand at fencing, he parried with a thrust direct, saying that, in paying the visit to Beuzerie, he was so far from thinking to reinstate his son, that he quite intended this visit to be his last. In vain did they beg that he would not be so easily offended; he was firm. They attempted to make excuses. He rose, saying that a d'Anguilhem was the equal of a Croisey, and that except for a slight difference in fortunes one d'Anguilhem was, in his opinion, worth as much as all the Beuzeries in the land.

This somewhat exaggerated estimate of the value of the d'Anguilhem family would undoubtedly have led to a serious quarrel between the two respectable old gentlemen, both exceedingly testy on questions of honor, had not Madame de Beuzerie, a new type of the Sabine woman, cast herself between them. The baron and the viscount contented themselves with bowing to each other with icy dignity, and parted in utter wrath. On that same evening, according to announcement, Mademoiselle Constance set out for the convent at Chinon.

Very impatiently the Chevalier Roger Tancrède awaited the baron's return, since, in his filial esteem for his father, he counted greatly upon him to renew with the Beuzeries the thread of the old friendship that was threatening to end. But, quite contrary to what he had hoped, the chevalier saw his father returning with a countenance sterner than when he went away. He then thought that things were going from bad to

worse, and, under pretext of being more than ever devoted to Latin, he shut himself in his room to work, he said, but really to sigh and grieve quite at his ease.

We have all been through the first emotions of a first love; we have all known by swelling grief that we were serving man's apprenticeship. We have all aged by many years in a single hour; it was with the poor chevalier as with us all.

He spent the night pacing the length and breadth of his room; then, when day appeared, to beguile his mental pain with physical fatigue, he shouldered his gun, unchained Castor, and set off for a hunt.

But the hunting was merely an excuse of which poor Roger had taken advantage. Without knowing how the thing happened, since he had coursed no hare in that direction, nor had the flight of a covey of partridges lured him over valley and mountain, without there having been the least excuse, in short, for the four or five leagues that he had accomplished on foot, our hunter found himself in a warren lying about five hundred paces from Beuzerie, and occupying both sides of the cross-road leading from the château to Loches. Now, it happened by a coincidence which, however, was not at all extraordinary, that the Vicomte de Beuzerie, also for distraction, without doubt, since he had his parental anxieties just as Roger had his lover's troubles, it happened, I repeat, that the Vicomte de Beuzerie had also come out to shoot a rabbit, and that at a bend of the narrow road, the two hunters came upon each other face to face.

Each recoiled a step at sight of the other. Roger had a great mind to take to his heels and run; but he felt instinctively that it would be a grossly stupid thing to do, and that it would be far wiser, being caught in the



act, to brazen it out; besides, he was in the middle of a warren, and he could as easily be looking for a rabbit as seeking for Mademoiselle Constance.

During the first moment of astonishment, Monsieur de Beuzerie frowned, and Roger rested the butt of his gun upon the ground and doffed his cap. The viscount was the first to break the silence.

"You again, Chevalier Roger Tancredi!" he tartly exclaimed.

"Monsieur le Vicomte," responded the other, "I am here by accident. My dog started up a wounded hare; I followed him, and before I was aware of it, found myself in this warren."

"And why is your dog at Beuzerie?" demanded the viscount.

"Why is my dog at Beuzerie? Why, I have twenty times seen your dogs all over La Pintade, and La Pintade, I think, belongs to Anguilhem; and then, besides, I thought it was an understood thing that we have the right to hunt on each other's grounds."

The words were enunciated with a firmness that the viscount did not expect from a lad of fifteen; but Roger had taken his misadventure to heart, and he must be revenged on some one. No one but Constance's father was at hand, and he abused Constance's father. Had he been merely a keeper, Roger would have beaten him.

"Certainly," replied the viscount, a little astonished at such logic, which proved that Roger was not easily disconcerted; "certainly it is understood, I know, that our preserves should be in common; but, after what has taken place, young man, many things are changed, do you hear?"

"With you, monsieur, but not with us," returned the chevalier. "You are master of your own lands, Monsieur

le Vicomte, and you can withhold the shooting from any one you wish; but I believe that I may say, in my father's name, monsieur, that you will always be very welcome to ours. Here, Castor, here!"

And Roger turned his back on the viscount, who stood aghast at the aplomb of his young neighbor; but the young man had gone barely a few steps before he had reflected upon the difference in age between him and the viscount, and he reproached himself for having presumed to give him a lesson. He therefore turned back, and, approaching the old gentleman, said politely, but not less firmly, —

"Monsieur, I have the honor to present my respects."

And he courteously bowed to the viscount, who mechanically returned the salute.

"The devil! the devil!" ejaculated the viscount, gazing after Roger as he strode away; "either I am greatly deceived, or there goes a young fellow that will give us a snarl to untangle. Luckily, Mademoiselle de Beuzerie is on the road to Chinon."

The viscount had forgotten that the lady superior of the Augustine convent of Chinon, to which he was returning his daughter, happened to be an aunt of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem.

## IV.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR DEMONSTRATES THAT FATHERS AND  
MOTHERS OF DAUGHTERS IN CONVENTS CAN SLEEP ON  
BOTH EARS.

BUT Roger had borne it in mind, and this is what had kept him from yielding to utter despair. He remembered even, if his childish memories were not at fault, that he had been a great favorite with that good aunt whom he had formerly visited with his mother on two or three occasions, and who, in turn, had as often come to Anguilhem ; yet Roger experienced some pangs in the depths of his heart for having been less attentive to her at that period, or rather at those different periods, than he should have been.

Indeed, he recalled the innumerable cares, attentions, and civilities lavished on himself which had then appeared irksome and fatiguing, and which, on the contrary, ought to have filled him with gratitude. Among other cloistral diversions, Roger had not forgotten how reluctantly he had been forced, during the whole time of his sojourn at Chinon, to engage in mass and vespers, and that, too, in spite of the angelic singing of the nuns, novices, and boarding-school girls, which accompanied the divine service. Ah ! well, only see how fickle in his tastes and changeable in his desires is man. At present, his highest ambition was to attend those religious ceremonies, to try to recognize, among all those angel voices, the voice of Constance soaring melodiously toward heaven ; only to see amid that white flock of the

Lord's, that figure, so ethereal, so light, so pure, that she seemed to belong to some unknown dream-world, which, for the time being, had lent her to ours, and which threatened each hour to recall her.

Above all, Roger dimly remembered in his aunt's room a certain window that overlooked a garden where the nuns walked in hours of recreation; a window at which — he really could not understand his blindness — he had scarcely looked. All this had been seething in the young man's mind ever since he learned that Mademoiselle de Beuzerie was at school in the convent directed by his aunt. The tender love of that good, kind aunt recurred to his heart, and he thought he owed her some atonement for the slight appreciation that he had displayed for her favors. His atonement should take the form of a visit, during which he would devote himself assiduously to his duties as Christian and nephew, attending services regularly and entertaining his aunt, especially when she sat in that charming little room overlooking the garden. The visit, then, was a settled thing; but, it is quite understood, *in petto*, and without the chevalier's having consulted any one as to its expediency.

Consequently, one morning, before daylight, Roger left the house, saddled Christopher, and, that no serious uneasiness should be felt on his account, informed the stable-boy that he was to be gone four or five days.

From Anguilhem to Chinon was a distance of about twenty-four leagues. Without overdoing Christopher, therefore, it was a matter of two days. Indeed, on that same night, Roger slept at Sainte Maure, a little town situated about midway of the distance to be made, and on the next day at four o'clock in the afternoon he was at Chinon.

Although it was six or eight years since the chevalier had

visited his aunt, he had not forgotten the way to the convent. He therefore proceeded straight to the Augustines, without needing to ask the way of any one, and knocked at the door of the saintly community. As the convent of the Augustines was very strictly kept, the attendant nun who came to open the door began to knit her brows in a formidable manner at sight of a tall, handsome youth demanding entrance into that holy asylum, but, upon his naming and defining the degree of relationship between him and the mother superior, he saw the face of the venerable concierge suddenly relax, and the doors open as of their own accord. Five minutes later, the Chevalier Roger Tancrède was respectfully kissing the plump hand of his good aunt.

She was one of those charming abbesses of whom the aristocratic traditions of the grand century have handed portraits down to us, — neither too large nor too small, plump, comfortable, perfect confections of gentle speech and pious aspect, who found means, even while observing the rules of the order, to impart to their garb a grace and coquetry savoring indeed of worldliness, but which, nevertheless, one did not know just where to attack. She was, moreover, a younger sister of Madame d'Anguilhem, and born, like her, a La Roche Berthaud, that is, descended from one of the oldest and noblest families in Touraine.

The good superior, who had never entertained any but holy thoughts, was very far from suspecting the motive which brought her nephew to Chinon. She gave orders that Christopher should be led to the stables, and that the excellent creature, whose life for some time past had been so very eventful, should receive the best possible care. As for Roger, he was simultaneously conducted to his apartment, an apartment under lock of the superior's

key, and consisting of a large and a small room. Now, the little room was that very little chamber so coveted by Roger, which looked out upon the cloister.

Roger's interview with his aunt had been most touching. It had been three years since the good lady had seen either the baron or the baroness; and, in three years, Roger had grown so tall, and he was so changed, that at first sight the venerable superior had been slow to identify him, and had almost withdrawn the hand which, in his joy on at last finding himself within the walls of the convent that held the object of his love, the chevalier had too enthusiastically pressed. But, at Roger's first words of the baron and the baroness, saying that he came in their name, full of anxiety as they were as to her health, to obtain for them news of their sister and sister-in-law, the good abbess had not held back. Tall boy as he had grown, she folded her nephew in her arms, and in a very motherly way returned on his brow the kiss which she had just received on the hand.

It was all Roger could desire for the moment: he had gained entrance.

Nothing was to be hoped for on that evening; besides, the dear child must be so tired after having ridden forty leagues on horseback, that all exertion was forbidden him until the next morning. In his aunt's own room he was served with a charming little supper, consisting of sliced chicken with jelly, tarts, and preserves; then he was shut in his room, with orders to go to bed at once, and not wake up until it was time for the morning service.

Roger submitted, not wishing to excite suspicion; he entered his room, and quite philosophically heard the door of his apartment locked behind him with a double turn. It is true that he still had the window. He immediately ran thither, for it was the recreation hour;

but, by an odious fatality, a heavy thunder-storm, which, most certainly, had little idea of what it was about at the moment, had just burst upon Chinon; consequently, as the convent garden afforded no shelter, all the nuns, the novices, and the boarders were just then within the cloister.

Roger saw that, so long as that pelting storm endured, he would be wasting his time waiting for any one to come into the garden. Surely, had Constance known that the handsome young man was standing there, his heart beating, and eyes fixed upon the garden whither she came daily to play, rain could not have stayed her, and in spite of the harm that might result to her little satin slippers and beautiful white gown, she would have felt the need of an airing, however damp and unwholesome it was at the time. But the poor child believed herself to be quite separated from the young man until the vacation, at least, perhaps for a longer time still, perhaps forever, and, leaning on the arm of one of her friends, she was walking very sadly within the cloister, her pretty little face, pale and sad, drooping above her breast.

And then night fell quite gently, bringing to the horizon beautiful bands of gilded clouds that clearly indicated a magnificent day for the morrow. Roger believed in prognostics of that kind. On the evenings preceding his great hunting expeditions, which, before he had seen Constance, had furnished the only excitements that could quicken his heart, he had more than once questioned that celestial barometer which the inhabitants of our country districts so skilfully interpret. He was, therefore, entirely reassured as to the morrow.

This prospect brought him one of the best nights that he had enjoyed for eight days. He fell asleep, confident

of the future. For, at fifteen, what is the future? The next day, three or four days perhaps, — a week at most.

In the morning he awoke with the birds; scarcely were his movements heard before an aged nun rapped at his door. Roger hastened to open it, and was met by his early breakfast. The early breakfast consisted of a cup of smoking cream, some little cakes that were yet hot, and some candied fruits.

Roger found the fare rather cloistral, indeed, and infinitely more elegant than substantial. However, as he understood that it was merely an instalment, he asked when the regular breakfast was served. He was told that it came after mass. He then inquired the hour of mass, and learned that it began at nine o'clock and ended at eleven. Upon which, Roger drank his cream to the last drop, and crunched his cakes to the very last crumb. He was finishing his breakfast, when he heard the rustling of a dress along the parquet, and saw his door open. It was the good aunt coming to find out how her nephew had passed the night, whether his bed had been soft, whether he had slept well, whether he had had any bad dreams, *et cetera*, *et cetera*.

Roger answered cheerfully all these inquiries; more than that, there was about him a little air of gaiety and good health which, to eyes less solicitous than those of his kind relative, would have answered of itself. He was curled, trim, and bewitching enough for a veritable little abbé. The good aunt felt an unspeakable desire to eat her nephew.

Yet she had not forgotten the infantine grimaces made by the dear little fellow, five or six years before, whenever the question of attendance upon divine service arose. So she thought it would be necessary to resort to some circumlocution in leading up to the subject which the



devout dame conscientiously believed herself forced to broach to the chevalier ; but to her great astonishment, the chevalier met her with the response that since the period of which his aunt was speaking, he was very much changed in his attitude toward matters of religion ; that he had reflected much on the subject, and that he had come to regard hearing mass and vespers every day not only as a duty, but as a pleasure also. Such a declaration overwhelmed the superior with joy. She gazed at her nephew with pious affection, and declared that from that moment she should cherish the hope of there being a great saint, one day, in the Anguilhem family, as there had been great lawyers and great captains, the nobility of the Anguilhems being of both gown and sword.

Meanwhile, the bell rang for mass. Forced to put into action the principles which he had just professed, Roger gallantly offered his arm to his aunt to conduct her to the chapel ; but, in this, Roger was deceived. The superior gave him to understand that, during the interval of six years which had rolled away since she had seen him, he had become too big a boy and, above all, too handsome a gentleman to enter the choir with her and take his seat, as he had formerly done, on the steps of her stall. He must simply take his seat with the congregation, outside of the choir, which was reserved exclusively for the nuns, novices, and boarders.

There was nothing for it but to submit to this rule ; besides, by insisting, Roger would undoubtedly have betrayed the influences that had suddenly rendered him so deeply devout. He bowed therefore in token of submission, and asked that he be shown the direction he must take in obedience to the instructions that he had just received.

The convent chapel was already open to the faithful.

As the Augustine dames of Chinon rightly passed for having the most beautiful voices in the province, the divine service at the convent was always well attended. Roger slipped into the front row of auditors, and sat in as close proximity as possible to the grille which separated the choir from the nave.

His expectation was rewarded. Above all those virgin voices which were lifted heavenward, he distinguished one, so sweet, so vibrant, so inspired, that he did not doubt for a moment that the voice was the voice of Constance. After that, his sole purpose was to follow that voice in all its modulations, without for an instant losing it among its companion voices. Hanging upon those notes, it seemed to him that his soul rose with hers to the celestial abode, whither she was going to sing the glory of the blessed, and again returned with her to earth, to which she descended to mourn the sins and sorrows of men, all the time soaring above earthly sounds, like the nocturnes drawn from the Æolian harps by the wind, and which might be taken for strains escaped from the concerts of the spirits of air.

As long as the mass lasted, Roger was like one entranced. He had never heard, or rather, he had never listened to the sacred music of the church, the most beautiful of all. He discovered within himself answering chords, of which he had himself been ignorant, chords which vibrated to the depths of his soul, being awakened at once by the double touch of love and religion.

Mass had been over for some time, and Roger still knelt before the grating of the choir. Throughout the sacred service the good superior had closely observed him, and she had been edified by the profound rapture depicted upon the face of her nephew every time the choir began to sing. And she awaited his reappearance

to congratulate him upon the change wrought within him, and which she no longer doubted, now that she had with her own eyes beheld the symptoms. Hence she was not at all surprised when Roger asked to withdraw a short time to his own room, there to recover from the mysterious emotions that he had just experienced. Not only did the worthy superior give assent, but, carried away by the feeling of admiration which piety so profound inspired in her, she even came very near asking the young neophyte for his benediction. Roger left her under the influence of that feeling and slowly retired to his room ; but barely had he given the key a double turn, when he ran to the window and opened it.

The garden was thronged with young girls, who, like bees, flitted from flower to flower, and revealed their instinctive simplicity or pride, some in weaving wreaths of marguerites, periwinkles, or violets, others in fashioning crowns of roses, of tulips, or of lilies.

At a little distance from the group of girls scattered here and there like flowers themselves amid the flowers, walked two of their number, talking in low tones and glancing uneasily around from time to time, as if to assure themselves that no one was listening. One of the two was Constance. Both had their backs turned to the window where Roger was standing, and they were pursuing a path that ended at a wall ; hence it was evident that, on reaching the end of the walk, they would retrace their steps. This is just what happened. The two girls turned round ; Constance raised her eyes mechanically toward the window. The young girl recognized Roger, and, unable to control her surprise, she gave a cry of joy and astonishment.

The chevalier had been seen, that was all he desired. He stepped back.

The cry uttered by Constance had been so shrill that her young companions came flocking about her to discover the cause of it. Constance shrank back as a flower folds upon its stem, and answered that she had stepped on a pebble, her ankle had turned, and she was at first afraid that it was sprained.

The poor child came very near suffering the penalty of her untruth, for she was instantly threatened with the convent doctor, whom twenty at once of her officious companions proposed to call. But Constance insisted with such truthful emphasis that she no longer felt any pain, that the girls who had gathered around went away one after the other, as birds flit one by one, and, in a little while they were again scattered about the garden. Constance remained alone with her friend.

Soon the eyes of the two girls were slowly turned in the direction of the window, and Roger clearly saw that there was no secret between the two fair creatures. Then he advanced, taking care, however, to keep in such a light as to be seen only by those who knew of his presence. Constance leaned against her friend's shoulder, and blushed deliciously. Then she rose, and began to pick a bunch of pansies, which she placed in the sash about her waist, and whose deep purple stood out in relief against her white dress. And then, after walking about a few moments, the two girls went indoors. An instant later Roger heard steps in the corridor. He ran to his door, but, quickly as he opened it, he was too late. He saw nothing but two sylph-like forms, two shadows, two visions vanishing at the extreme end of the gallery. But in front of his door, as the sole trace of the flight of the two school-girls, lay the bunch of pansies which, a moment before, he had seen in Constance's sash.

Roger pounced upon the bouquet, and kissed it again

and again ; then, as he heard the footsteps of his aunt, who, thinking that he must have recovered from his religious emotions, was coming for him to go to breakfast, he quickly slipped the bouquet into his breast, and hastened to meet the worthy superior.

Nothing so emboldens one as success. The chevalier had seen Constance at a distance, and had been seen by her. He had pressed against his heart the flowers that she had worn ; it was more than he had hoped for at first, and yet it was already not enough. He desired to meet her. He must speak with her ; and he lay in wait for the first opportunity, ready to seize it by the forelock whenever it presented itself. The good superior herself gave it to him.

One can understand that the conversation between Roger and his aunt was an interminable exchange of questions on the one side and answers on the other. At first the questions related to the baron and the baroness, then to the farmers, and then to the land ; from this they passed to the nearest neighbors, who were the Senectères, then from the Senectères they went on to the Chemillés ; at last, leaving the Chemillés, they reached the Beuzeries.

"Ah, *bon Dieu !*" cried Roger on hearing that name, "how fortunate, dear aunt, that you have reminded me of a commission which I had utterly forgotten. Three or four days before my departure for Chinon I met Monsieur de Beuzerie when out hunting, and, as he knew I was about to make you a visit, he begged to charge me with a letter for his daughter. Now, what I have done with that letter, which he sent me on the day before my departure, I have not the remotest idea."

"Ah, *mon Dieu !*" exclaimed the good superior, "it is to be hoped that you have not lost it. The poor little

girl has been very sad since her return, and that letter would have been a comfort to her."

"Indeed, aunt," said Roger, "I will search for it; it must be in my portmanteau. But if Mademoiselle de Beuzerie is sad you should give her a doll, for she is still a mere child, it seems to me."

"Not so fast, my practical man," returned the superior. "You are wrong; in a month Mademoiselle de Beuzerie has become a young woman. I do not know what happened to her during her stay with her parents, but I do know that she is no longer recognizable."

"But," said Roger, "I dined with her at Anguilhem barely eight or ten days ago, and I must say, aunt, that I did not observe the slightest trace of what you are saying."

"Well, listen," said the good superior, "do you go and look for the letter, and I will summon Constance. You shall judge for yourself."

"Certainly," said Roger, bending over to pick up his napkin, for he felt the blood rushing to his face at such a rate that he knew his blush would betray him if his aunt chanced to glance at him, "certainly, aunt; but," continued he, with an effort at self-control, "after breakfast, if you please."

"Yes, yes, eat your breakfast, my boy, eat your breakfast in peace. At your age it is an important matter, I know; but I beg that you will try to find that letter, for if it is lost the poor child will be in despair, I am sure."

"Oh, it shall be found, my dear aunt! You need not be anxious. I think I remember, now, where it is."

"I am delighted!" returned the abbess. "My poor little girls, how I love them!"

"Well, aunt," resumed d'Anguilhem, "I will not de-

lay any longer the pleasure that you think this letter will afford to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie. Send for her, and I will proceed to look for the paternal epistle."

And Roger went out of the room with such an easy air that, had the superior entertained any suspicions, she could not have preserved them in the face of such assurance; but she was a hundred leagues from having any. She was, therefore, completely the dupe of the chevalier.

Roger delayed his return for two reasons: first, that he might have time to write a letter professedly from the viscount; secondly, because he wished to give Constance time to compose herself. As to the contents of the letter, the reader suspects beforehand; it contained a conjugation of the verb "to love" in the past, present, and future tenses. Roger also informed Constance as to the pass to which matters had come between him and the viscount, giving her, word for word, their interview in the warren at Beuzerie. It was important that Constance should be prepared, and should not permit herself to be taken by surprise by any strategy on the part of her parents.

On returning Roger found Mademoiselle de Beuzerie beside his aunt. When she saw him Constance blushed and paled by turns; but fortunately her back was toward the window, so that, placed as she was in her own shadow, the good superior observed nothing. Roger approached the young maiden with great deliberation, and presenting the letter, said, —

"Mademoiselle, will you pardon me, arriving as I did last evening, for having so long delayed giving you this letter? But Monsieur de Beuzerie expressly told me to give you the letter personally, that I might bring him positive news of your health, about which he seemed quite uneasy. I have, therefore, begged my good aunt to

put you to this slight inconvenience. You will pardon me, will you not?"

Constance stammered a few words of thanks; but, as her first glance at the letter told her that the address was not in her father's handwriting, she understood, and put it in her apron pocket instead of opening it.

"Well," said the superior, taking the young girl's two hands and drawing her toward herself, "well, will this letter console you any, naughty little pouter? for I have heard about you. I am told that since your return you do nothing but moan and sigh."

"Why, think of it, aunt," interrupted Roger, who saw that the poor child was on the rack, "one very naturally cries a little on leaving one's parents. Then the convent is not a very amusing place, is it, Mademoiselle Constance? and distractions must be rare."

"Well," said the abbess, "I intend to give you one to-day, my dear little girl. Instead of dining in the refectory with everybody, you shall come and dine with me and my nephew."

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Constance, unable to conceal her first impulse of joy.

"Mademoiselle," said Roger, realizing that he must not give his aunt time to analyze the feeling that had wrested from Constance the exclamation of delight which she had imprudently allowed to escape her; "Mademoiselle, am I to have the happiness of being your messenger as I have had the honor of being Monsieur your father's? and will you condescend to intrust me with an answer to the letter I have brought you?"

"Are you then leaving so soon, monsieur?" asked Constance, blushing.

"Yes," returned Roger, "I am afraid that I shall be compelled to leave Chinon at any moment. Alas! I am



in the hands of a tutor, and I confess that whenever I hear a sound, whenever a door is opened, I expect to see the shrewd face of my dear Abbé Dubuquoi. Pray, lose no time then, I beg, if you wish to profit by the opportunity that I offer for the delivery of your reply, which, I am sure, is awaited most impatiently."

"In that case, monsieur," said Constance, "if our good mother is willing, I will retire to read the letter that you have brought, and to answer it."

"Go, dear child, go," said the superior, kissing the girl's forehead, "and do not forget that we expect you to dine with us at two o'clock; besides, I will send to remind you."

"Oh! that will not be necessary, madame," replied Constance. "It affords me too much pleasure to be with you and monsieur your nephew, our kind country neighbor, not to respond promptly to your kind invitation."

And, quite recovered from her first embarrassment, Mademoiselle de Beuzerie made a most coquettish little courtesy, and withdrew, her hand on the letter that she kept in her pocket, while Roger watched her departure with his hand over the bunch of flowers which he was pressing to his heart.

Constance kept her word; she was more than prompt. At a quarter before two she was in the superior's room where Roger was waiting for her. As she entered he asked if she had remembered her letter. Thereupon, Constance, full of blushes, drew from her girdle a pretty little note addressed to the Vicomte de Beuzerie, which she delivered to Roger, but without having strength even to commend it to his care. As for Roger, under the pretext of fearing to lose it, he went off immediately to secure it in his portfolio, he said, but in reality to devour the lines that she had enclosed.

It was one of those charming child-compositions, very naïve, very affectionate, very sincere, full of promises of undying love, born yesterday and sworn to last till death. All those protestations covered four pages, and yet this could have been reduced to three words: "I love you." Roger first kissed the envelope, then the four pages of the letter, back and front, then every line of the four pages, and finally every word of every line. His delight resembled delirium.

He returned and found Constance blushing like a cherry. The two poor children exchanged a look full of unspeakable happiness. At that moment, the door opened, and the superior gave a pleased cry. At this outburst, the two young people turned, and their eyes, all shining with happiness, became clouded with tears.

The person whose unexpected appearance had elicited a cry of pleasure from the superior was the Baronne d'Anguilhem.

The two sisters embraced, while the poor children glanced significantly at each other, as if to say, "All is over." Then Roger approached his mother, who, instead of embracing him as she had just embraced his aunt, merely gave him her hand to kiss. As for Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, she made the baroness a deep courtesy, to which the latter responded by a chilling inclination of the head.

The two children stood trembling; but the baroness said nothing, and after the first greetings exchanged with her sister, she accepted the latter's invitation to place herself at the table.

Constance longed to ask to be excused, but she dared not. Her place was between the baroness and the superior, hence, during the entire dinner, she dared not raise her eyes; more than once, indeed, Roger surprised a

tear as it stealthily rolled down her cheek, and was deftly brushed away with her napkin.

As for him, he blushed and turned pale ten times a minute. He tried to eat, but his heart was so full that the feat was impossible.

Meanwhile, the baroness was telling how it had occurred to her also to surprise her dear sister, and how the baron had been unable to accompany her, detained as he was by his preparations for a journey that he contemplated taking with the chevalier immediately upon the latter's return to Anguilhem. At this news of the chevalier's prospective journey, poor Constance's tears precipitated themselves more rapidly, and the chevalier felt his heartache increase. At last, Constance could contain herself no longer; she threw herself back and sobbed aloud. In this unlooked-for explosion, the good abbess beheld no more than the young girl's grief, and she questioned her — we must do her this justice — with a mother's anxiety. But Constance only made answer that she did not know what was the matter except that it was probably what people called the blues, and that she would ask permission to retire to her room.

This permission was the more readily accorded her as Madame la Baronne d'Anguilhem did not at all press her to remain. Constance withdrew therefore without one consoling word; for, restrained by his mother's presence, Roger did not dare even to bid her good-bye.

After Mademoiselle de Beuzerie had gone and the baroness thought that she must have re-entered her own room, she bade her son go to his apartment and without delay prepare his portmanteau, as it was the baron's order that he should set out that same evening for Anguilhem. Roger obeyed without a word of protest. Filial respect was still, at that period, one of those

precious family virtues that were considered sacred, especially by the country aristocracy, that sanctuary of the nobility. He therefore very meekly saluted his mother and retired to his room.

The two sisters remained together.

## V.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM ESCAPED FROM  
THE COLLEGE OF THE JESUITS AT AMBOISE WITH  
THE INTENTION OF CARRYING OFF MADemoisELLE  
DE BEUZERIE, AND WHAT NEWS HE LEARNED ON  
REACHING THE CONVENT.

It is unnecessary to tell the reader upon what topic the conversation of the two ladies turned. Let us say merely that at the end of an hour they summoned the chevalier, who, quite crestfallen in his discomfiture, came with his little portmanteau under his arm.

The superior knew all. She had sent to Constance for the letter which the chevalier had brought her, pretending it to be from the viscount; but Constance had met her friend in the corridor, and had quickly slipped the letter, her only treasure, into the other's hand. Thereupon, as no one knew of this incident, Mademoiselle boldly replied that she had burned the letter they were asking for, and that, if they doubted her, they had only to search for it; and they did, but in vain.

The baroness had come with the horse and cariole, escorted by the farmer. Christopher was tied at the side of his mate, and they departed after a brief leavetaking, during which the abbess maintained toward her nephew the severe dignity befitting her wounded pride.

No sooner were Madame d'Anguilhem and her son alone in the cariole, than the baroness, observing the chevalier's sadness, lost all power to exhibit malice

toward the poor boy. Women have an instinctive sympathy for all the pangs of love, and the strictest mother becomes indulgent when a fault committed by the heart is in question. Thus, instead of the dire reproaches expected by the chevalier, there followed a train of thoroughly logical arguments, based, first, upon the chevalier's age, which was barely fifteen years; then upon the difference between the fortunes of the Beuzeries and the d'Anguilhems; and finally upon the plans long cherished by Constance's father and the father of the Comte de Croisey. But to all this reasoning Roger opposed the following dilemma, as unanswerable and as powerful as all the logic in the world:—

“Mother, I love Constance, Constance loves me, and we are firmly resolved to die if we are separated.”

During the two days of the journey's duration, the baroness attacked her son at all points; but she exhausted her logic without being able to obtain any response save the one we have given.

When the chevalier's disappearance had become known, a grand council was held at Anguilhem. The council was composed of the baron, the baroness, and the Abbé Dubuquoi. Now, the road he had taken had been learned on the day of Roger's departure, and, the direction once known, it had not been difficult to guess whither he was bound. The especial question before the council concerned the means to be employed in checking the progress of this love affair, which was exhibiting such alarming symptoms; or, at least, if it progressed, to prevent its resulting in a serious breach between the two families. The d'Anguilhems and the Beuzeries had always lived on excellent terms as neighbors, and it was the intention of the baron and the baroness still to maintain, on their part, at least, those pleasant relations.

The decision arrived at by the triumvirate was to the effect that, on his return to Anguilhem, the chevalier should be sent off to the College of the Jesuits at Amboise to pursue a course in philosophy. Upon this verdict the baroness set out to expedite his return, while the baron, as Madame d'Anguilhem had told her son, made preparations himself to conduct Roger to the capital of the province, lest he should play some prank upon his tutor while on the way.

Arriving at Anguilhem two days after his departure from Chinon, the chevalier, therefore, found everything ready for their start twenty-four hours later. Needless to say, any thought of rebellion against the parental decree was far from his mind. In the presence of his sweetheart, the chevalier felt himself already a young man; but when confronting the baron and the baroness, he promptly realized that he was still only a child.

The journey was a dreary one. Between the Abbé Dubuquoi, for whom he had no deep affection, and his father, whose severity of countenance momentarily checked his tender feelings, Roger was very ill at ease. Besides, the thought that he, a child of the woods, of the meadows, and of freedom, would have to spend a whole year in a kind of prison with a throng of people robed in black, who would impose the rules of their order upon his life, this thought, I say, weighed upon him as being a punishment out of all proportion to the fault he had committed. Then, a whole year without seeing Constance, — it was a century.

From time to time, it is true, there flashed through his brain a plan which had at first terrified the chevalier but to which, nevertheless, he became accustomed by dint of thinking about it. It was nothing less than adding all the little savings that he could get together to the small

sum which the baroness had already given him at parting and that which his father would no doubt give when leaving him; then, when he should find himself in possession of two or three hundred livres, which in the eyes of the chevalier was a fortune, he would escape from the college, set out for Chinon, scale the convent wall, carry off Constance, run away with her, and be married by the first priest they met.

Among the twenty-five or thirty volumes that Roger possessed in his library at Anguilhem, there was a romance entitled "*L'Astrée*," which had seen its best days in the baroness' youth, and in which flourished any number of kings who carried off shepherdesses and of queens who espoused shepherds. Now, Roger thought that, however great the pecuniary distance separating him from Constance, it was not to be compared with the social distance between a powerful king and a poor shepherdess, or a great queen and a humble shepherd. Then, too, there is an age at which one thinks that life is adjusted like a novel, and Roger had reached that age; only, what he did not know was that, while they could run away together at that age, they could not then be married.

In extreme situations, such as, for the time being, we have even thought hopeless, it is amazing, it is amazing, I repeat, to what extent peace is yielded to the mind and resignation to the heart by fixing upon a course of conduct, no matter what it lacks of common sense, let it present not a shadow of success. Roger well knew that, even supposing all the favorable circumstances, and many such would be required, were leagued to second this plan, it could be carried out only at a very distant date. But, no matter! however distant the hour, by adding days and months together, the hour must come. Point out to the



traveller, worn out with fatigue, lost in the darkness, wandering in a forest, ready to drop from weariness, point out a light upon the horizon, be that horizon two or three leagues away, and the poor wanderer will pluck up courage and walk with a step as rapid and as eager as in the morning at the time of setting out.

The chevalier, then, had already regained some degree of courage on his arrival at Amboise, and he entered the college more resigned, apparently, than his father had hoped for. This resignation touched the worthy gentleman, who, it must be said, tenderly loved his sole heir. Thus it came to pass that the paternal heart melted, and the result of the softened mood was a sum of seventy-two livres, represented by three louis d'or which the baron slipped into his son's hand at parting.

These three louis, added to the other two that the baroness had given him, formed a total of five louis, or one hundred and twenty livres, which was already a pretty little beginning toward his savings.

Roger had comprehended that, in order to avoid all suspicion, he must begin by applying himself to work with exemplary assiduity. They do thorough work, as we know, among the Jesuits, and although the Abbé Dubuquoi was a preceptor very much above the ordinary tutor, the good fathers, after examining Roger on what he knew, nevertheless decided that it was necessary for him to review his rhetoric. This news, which prolonged to two years his one year's stay in college, Roger received with greater fortitude than the abbé expected from him. However, as the abbé, less easily deceived than the baron, already suspected some wile to be underlying that appearance of resignation, he resolved not to lose sight of his pupil.

But, vigilant and farseeing as the abbé was, in this he was deceived. The chevalier's was one of those fertile natures in which ideas have only to be sown for them to bear fruit. Roger, who had no remedy for his love but work, and who, indeed, pretending to work, shut himself up to commune with Constance, Roger made rapid progress; young things easily become enamored. Our school-boy was enamored of Greek and Latin poetry; besides, in Virgil's *Bucolics*, in the *Idyls* of Theocritus, he was always coming upon some dialogue between shepherd and shepherdess that reminded the pupil of his own situation. It was undoubtedly meagre comfort; but meagre though it was, it aided our lover to wait.

Roger's first care had been to ascertain whether among his fellow pupils there were not some who came from Chinon. Fortune gave Roger his desire; three of his comrades were born in that town, and their parents lived there. The new-comer allied himself with them, and learned with a joy that can be understood, that one of the three young men, Henri de Narcey by name, had a sister in the Augustine convent. Now, as the sister had been three years at the convent school, she must be intimately acquainted with Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, or, at least, she must know her. Here were the means of correspondence.

Vacation time arrived. As Roger had entered college only in June, and as the vacation began at the end of August, a fear which had more than once beset his mind was realized. On Our Lady's Day, he received from the Baron d'Anguilhem a letter in which the worthy gentleman employed all his logic to explain to his son that the latter would do much better to spend his six weeks' vacation in studying and making up for lost time, than to return to Anguilhem. The truth was that the baron

and the baroness were depriving themselves of the pleasure of seeing their son, lest the neighborhood of Beuzerie should rekindle in the chevalier's heart the love which they thought about extinguished, because Roger no longer wrote of it. Also, to temper this denial as much as possible to the poor student, the Abbé Dubuquoi was authorized to take him on excursions in the neighborhood of Tours, and, as no one knew how parsimoniously the chevalier had managed his little hoard, the abbé was requested to give his pupil, out of the funds intrusted to his administration, two louis from the baron and one louis from the baroness. Now, as Roger had spent but twenty-four livres during the three months which had just rolled away, he consequently found himself seven louis ahead.

Roger, then, had become intimate with the three youths from Chinon, and particularly with Henri de Narcey. Also, when the latter was on the point of leaving for Chinon, the chevalier did not hesitate to unburden his heart to him. He told how he had loved Mademoiselle de Beuzerie and how she loved him; how he had been sent to college at Amboise because his parents disapproved of a love that did not meet with the approbation of Constance's parents; and how, finally, he was to be detained at college lest, during his stay at Anguilhem, he should commit some imprudent act upon finding himself so near Beuzerie.

Henri de Narcey understood it all perfectly, and he enlisted himself and his sister in the service of his comrade. Communication would be easily opened, because he had often heard his sister speak of Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, and always as an intimate friend. Indeed, Constance de Beuzerie and Mademoiselle Herminie de Narcey were never apart; and from the picture

of his sister that Henri drew for Roger, the latter recognized the young girl who was arm in arm with Constance on the day when he saw her in the convent garden, and when, at sight of him, Constance had been unable to repress the cry of surprise which she had been forced to pass off as a cry of pain.

Roger intrusted a letter to Henri; on her return to the convent the letter was to be delivered by Herminie to Constance; then, under cover of Herminie's letter to her brother, Constance could send back her answer. Roger unfolded to Constance his plan of running away from college, of carrying her off from the convent and marrying her in the presence of the curé of the first village that he came to on the road; once married, as a matter of course, their stubborn parents must bestow their blessing, whatever their dislike for the match. The letter, too, was full of pledges of inviolable fidelity and undying love.

The vacation arrived. The two friends parted, Roger commending his interests to Henri, Henri swearing to Roger that they could not be in better hands. September rolled away without Roger's manifesting the least impatience. He only, of all his comrades, had remained at college, and he worked in a way to satisfy the demands of the most exacting. The Abbé Dubuquoi could make nothing out of it.

At the beginning of October the students began to return; but, although Henri was the one whom Roger awaited with the most impatience, Henri was the last to return. True, on his return there was a little letter in the hand that Henri extended to Roger.

Oh! it was a very brief little letter containing only three lines; but those three lines said more than volumes. Here they are: —

"I love you no less than you love me. You offer me your life. I give you mine. Take it, then, and do with it what you will.

"CONSTANCE."

It would seem that the library of Beuzerie must also have contained some beautiful and alluring romance like "*L'Astrée*," suited to form the heart and mind of a young girl.

Matters had progressed wonderfully, thanks to Henri's ingenuity. As all letters that left the convent were, naturally, previously examined, just as he was setting off for Tours he had feigned indisposition. This delay had given the Augustine boarding-pupils time to re-enter their convent. In this way Herminie and Constance had been able to meet again; and then, on Henri's departure, he had made a farewell visit to his sister, who, as she kissed him, had slipped the little letter from Constance into his hand.

Roger was at peace, then, from that time forth. Any effort on his part would be seconded by Constance. His love was repaid with equal love, and more, with the tenderness and the devotion that constitute the everlasting superiority of woman's love over ours.

The days sped on, while Roger, faithful to his scheme of economy, heaped up his little treasure saved from the parental largess. Twice, to comfort their son in his exile, which he was enduring for that matter with heroic resignation, the baron and the baroness visited Tours. On both occasions the name of Constance was scarcely mentioned. Hence, on their second return to Anguilhem, both baron and baroness were convinced that their son had become perfectly reasonable on that subject.

By the end of six or eight months, therefore, Roger had lulled every suspicion to rest, and, as he had

attained his sixteenth year and completed his course in rhetoric, it was hinted that, if he promised to commit no more follies, he should not be sent back to college. Roger promised whatever they desired.

Roger had turned over and over in his mind a thousand plans of escape, each more unstable than the other. It was no easy thing for any student to escape, and still less so for Roger than for another, since, in addition to the general surveillance of the good Jesuit fathers, he was still under the particular surveillance of Abbé Dubuquoi. At last Roger hit upon a very simple plan, and it had occurred to him last just because of its simplicity.

Like all the pupils who had attained their sixteenth year, or who were in rhetoric or philosophy, Roger had a private room, but in it, for the sake of greater precaution, the abbé slept. True, once asleep, the abbé slept soundly, and there was one most vociferous sign which proclaimed when he was enjoying the very fulness of sleep. In short, and to be brief, the Abbé Dubuquoi possessed the infirmity of snoring.

Here, then, is what Roger, by dint of hard thinking, at last settled upon.

On the night fixed for his flight, Roger would go to bed as usual, and would let the abbé go to bed; but he would take good care to observe where the latter placed his clothes. Then, as he and the abbé were almost of the same size, after the lights were all out, and by the regular snoring of the abbé he felt assured that his guardian was asleep, he would softly rise, array himself in the black breeches, black coat, and bands, cover his head with the dignity of the three-cornered hat, and get out of the room as lightly as possible. In all probability the abbé would not wake until the next morning at six

o'clock, and, in that case, the fugitive would have eight or ten hours the start of any who might attempt to pursue.

As for a pretext to give the porter for going out at such an hour, the pretext was already found. Roger decided, too, that his escape should be made on Wednesday night. He had calculated that he would require three good rests in going from Amboise to Chinon, and, consequently, he would arrive there on Sunday. Once there, he had decided upon nothing very definite, and counted on taking counsel of circumstances. Only, he would present himself to the attendant as an abbé, deliver a letter from Henri to his sister, and, by a certain mark contained in that letter, a mark unintelligible to any one but to her, Constance would know that Roger was at Chinon.

The day of that momentous Wednesday glided by amid keenest anguish on the part of Roger; but he had cherished the plan too long to draw back from it at the moment of execution. He therefore kept face and voice under control; he had the courage to do his theme and his translation. Finally, at supper, he ate as usual and was ordinarily gay. Verily, the chevalier was predestined to romantic adventures, and had received from nature all the qualities requisite for their achievement. At nine o'clock the abbé and the chevalier went to bed. The abbé laid all his clothes on a chair near his bed; then he extinguished the light. At the end of a quarter of an hour he was sleeping heavily.

Roger waited for another quarter of an hour to pass. He cautiously crept out of bed, pausing at every creak it made. Finally, his feet touched the floor; he leaned against the wall and paused a moment. The abbé's snoring continued to make itself heard in dignified

periodicity. All was going well. Then he advanced, his hands extended in the dark, until he touched the chair which, for the time being, was affording clothes-pegs for the entire tutorial wardrobe. He transferred the wardrobe from its chair to his bed, and there began his toilet, which was accomplished without mishap. At last, the toilet complete, Roger, being perfectly transformed from head to foot into an abbé, opened the door as gently as possible, closed it in like manner, listened to discover whether his various movements had won the tutor from his sleep, gained the staircase, descended to the court, where, knocking boldly at the porter's lodge, he declared, —

“It is the Abbé Dubuquoi, Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem's tutor. Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem is very ill, and I am going for a doctor.”

Half asleep, the porter recognized through the casement the abbé's garb, drew the cord as he muttered something which Roger did not understand, and Roger found himself outside. His first impulse was to run straight ahead, but, after ten minutes of racing, he stopped abruptly; he was about to pitch into the Loire.

There, he took his bearings. He knew that Chinon was nearly twenty-five leagues from Amboise, and that, in order to reach the former town, he had only to follow the river's course. But there were two ways of doing this, along the left bank and along the right. Roger decided in favor of the right bank. That route was longer by three or four leagues, it is true, but it offered him greater security against being overtaken. Thereupon he crossed between decks and walked all night without stopping, arriving at Rouvray about six o'clock in the morning. There, fatigue forced him to make a halt. He had gone eight leagues at a stretch.



He stopped at an inn, threw himself on a bed, and ordered that he should be awakened at ten o'clock. His intention was to set out again as soon as he had breakfasted.

When undressing, Roger became aware that, in addition to his own purse, which he had slipped into one pocket of his waistcoat, he was also in possession of the abbé's purse, which had remained in the other pocket. As the money it contained belonged to his father, Roger, instead of conceiving any scruples, rejoiced greatly at the circumstance which increased his funds by four louis and a half crown, or ninety-nine livres. The chevalier had now the wherewithal to proceed to the end of the world.

While Roger was breakfasting, his host entered to tell him that a boatman who was descending the Loire and seeking passengers all along the route had sent to inquire if he would not like to continue his journey by water. Roger was delighted with the idea, since his trail would more easily be lost by water than by land, a boat's way on a stream being as difficult to discover as any of those ranked by King Solomon, of proverbial and poetic fame, as past finding out.

Roger therefore replied that if his journey would lose nothing in speed by the proposed mode of locomotion, he would accept with the greatest pleasure. The landlord assured him that, far from losing, he would gain, since, by that mode, he could travel day and night. This assurance so won Roger that, although the boat would not leave for two hours, he charged the host to engage his place at once. True, the advantage of travelling all night easily made up the loss of two hours.

However, when the inn-keeper was going away, Roger called him back to learn who were to be his fellow-

passengers on the way. He then found that they were for the most part merchants going to Nantes on business, officers rejoining their garrisons at Brest or Rennes, and Parisians travelling for pleasure. There were none in the list of whom he could be suspicious. The enumeration, therefore, did not cause him to alter his first decision, and he sent the inn-keeper away, telling him that the boatman could count on him.

Toward noon they really set off. The boat, or rather the barge, towed by four strong horses travelling along the bank, went at as good a rate as could be desired; so that, all day long, Roger congratulated himself on having chosen this mode of travel which promised him progress by night not less rapid than that accomplished by daylight. At three o'clock they stopped at Tours for dinner; but, about five o'clock, they proceeded again, and kept up an even speed until night. Questioned as to the distance they could make during the night, the captain answered that on the following morning they would be at Langeais in time for breakfast. On the strength of this promise, Roger wrapped himself in his mantle, lay down on a bench, and went to sleep.

Yet, in spite of the precautions he had taken, Roger was not without uneasiness. His slumber was very much troubled by dreams. It seemed to him that he saw appear on the horizon two horsemen, in one of whom he recognized his father, in the other the Abbé Dubuquoi, who, on seeing the barge, quickened the pace of their horses. The barge, on the contrary, in spite of Roger's entreaties to the master, slackened its speed as much as the horsemen quickened theirs. Finally, they were so near that Roger, still dreaming, thought he had no other resource than to hide himself

in the depths of the hold. He went down, therefore, wedged himself between two casks and waited. In a short time it seemed to him that the motion of the barge not only became still slower, but that it ceased altogether. Then he heard approaching footsteps; then he felt a hand seize him by the collar. He was again a prisoner; he gave a cry and awoke.

His first feeling was one of joy; for, on opening his eyes, he saw that he was still perfectly free. His dream, however, was not all an illusion. The barge had stopped and was at a standstill in mid-stream. Roger went to inquire of the pilot the cause of their lying to, and found him as soundly asleep as any of the passengers. He hesitated a moment about disturbing him; but the situation was too grave for his hesitation to last long. He therefore shook the worthy navigator by the arm, and the latter, muttering at being roused from his slumbers, grumpily answered, as though the event were quite natural, and one, consequently, that nobody had a right to be surprised or disconcerted at, that the barge was stranded on a sand-bank, an accident that always happened three or four times in the trip. This explanation given, the pilot dropped his head again upon the helm, and he was fast asleep.

In fact the Loire was at that period what it still is to-day, one of the most freakish rivers in France. One is never certain of finding her at home. Like that tyrant of antiquity who had twelve bed-chambers, she never sleeps two consecutive nights in the same bed.

So then, they were on a sand-bar, as much as to say that they were threatened with staying there until a rainstorm should come to supply the river with the water that was lacking, or until, by doubling or trebling the number of horses on the tow-line, they should suc-

ceed in clearing the barge from the obstruction which had stopped her course.

By putting one's self for a moment into Roger's place it would not be difficult to imagine the effect that such news would produce upon him. It was already twenty-four hours since he started, and he had made only fifteen or eighteen leagues, that is, he was barely half way. Yet, however critical the situation, there was only one thing to do, and that was to have patience. If, by the next morning, the water had not risen, or if the horses did not succeed in extricating the barge, the chevalier would take the left or the right bank, it mattered little which, and continue his way on foot.

This point decided in his mind, Roger tried to go to sleep, but it was impossible. He remained awake, therefore, thinking of Constance, and considering means of reaching her.

This, on the whole, seemed the easiest way. Were Constance, by means of a letter from Henri de Narcey to his sister, forewarned of Roger's presence, she would, undoubtedly, from that moment hold herself in readiness for any event. By the help of a ladder, Roger would then scale the convent wall, where it ran along a perfectly deserted street. Then, as Constance's window overlooked the garden, she could descend from her window by means of the ladder. Both would then scale the wall and take flight to the nearest village, where any priest would marry them.

While turning over all these ideas again and again in his mind, Roger saw the day begin to dawn. But day came without any alteration in the position of the barge. The entire night had passed without the Loire having found it expedient to rise an inch. The barge-master, on the other hand, recognizing the insufficiency

of his four animals, had gone to the nearest village in search of reenforcement, and had there secured eight horses, which, added to the first four, made a total of twelve. But, in spite of the combined efforts of the poor beasts and the more than conscientious lashes of the whip which their driver rained upon them, the barge moved no more than if it had struck root in the bottom of the Loire. Two or three hours were thus spent in fruitless efforts.

Roger bit his finger-nails in impatience, nor could he understand the apathy of the passengers by whom he was surrounded, who stolidly and tranquilly discussed the event which so exasperated him, all suggesting plans for their relief which were each more impracticable than the other, and seeming, moreover, satisfied to remain there until a miracle of God should come to extricate them. He was among people who were visibly accustomed to descending the Loire, and, consequently familiar with such occurrences.

Roger sought out the master of the barge, whom he warned that if, in half an hour, the barge was not afloat, he would leap into the water and swim ashore. The captain was very tranquilly breakfasting upon cutlets and Orléans wine. He listened to Roger's speech from beginning to end, and inquired if he had paid his passage. Roger answered by exhibiting his receipt. Thereupon the captain assured him that he was at perfect liberty to act as he saw fit, and he turned away to finish his cutlets and empty his bottle.

Roger was seized with a mad desire to strangle the barge-master. However, as he knew that a murder would only complicate his case, he restrained himself, and went on deck.

He hoped to find the passengers impatient, and thought

to take advantage of their restlessness, and stir up a little mutiny. Consequently he approached the different groups; but, to his great astonishment, he found that instead of busying themselves about the accident, all were engaged in conversation about their own affairs. The politicians were commenting on the conference at Geertruidenberg, the officers were talking of the battle of Malplaquet, and the merchants discussed the tithes-tax. Roger saw that nothing was to be expected from them, and he began to meditate the execution of his threat to the captain of swimming ashore, when he saw five or six boats push off the bank and row toward the barge. They contained natives who came to offer fresh provisions, fruits, and cakes to the stranded passengers, as the savages of the South Sea Islands surround the vessels that wander into the Pacific Ocean.

Roger bought one boat's whole cargo on condition that the boat should at once convey him to land.

The little abbé's departure interrupted the conversations for a short time. A few heads turned to see him descend, and gazed after him a moment as he moved off; but very soon each had returned to his theme, and no one seemed any longer to be concerned about the deserter.

Roger landed opposite Luynes. He had a great mind to gain the town, almost a quarter of a league distant from the river-bank, and see if he could there find a horse, but he thought that it would cause delay. Besides, in taking a horse he must needs take a man, and that would be admitting another into his secret. He therefore decided to continue his journey on foot, and immediately headed for Langeais, where he arrived at seven o'clock in the evening.

There, however great Roger's desire to proceed, he

was obliged to stop and spend the night. He must at least make an hour's halt for supper and a little rest. But how was he to set off again on foot at eight o'clock in the evening? Such a course was liable to arouse suspicions; and besides, our swain had reached the place where he must cross the Loire and proceed inland. Now, as only the cross-roads led from Langeais to Chinon, the chances were ten to one that he would lose his way in the darkness. Willy nilly, therefore, Roger must spend the night at the inn, and that his time might not be lost, by the inn-keeper's aid he thoroughly familiarized himself with the route to be pursued the next morning.

At daybreak, Roger resumed his journey. He hoped, by brisk walking, to be at Chinon about two o'clock in the afternoon. In fact, at nine o'clock he breakfasted at Armentières. By noon, indeed, he stopped at Saint Benoît, and at a few minutes before nine o'clock he saw, at last, the towers and steeples of the much desired town. Far from stimulating his courage, the sight seemed to terrify him. He paused a moment, his legs trembling and his hand pressed against his bosom as if to still the beatings of his heart. Finally he plucked up courage, and, ashamed without doubt of his weakness, he started off at a quickened pace. Fifteen minutes later he had reached Chinon.

Then, as with all stout hearts, the approach of danger aroused the chevalier's spirit. He proceeded directly to the convent, knocked unhesitatingly at the door, and sustaining with the utmost calm the scrutinizing gaze of the attendant, he said, —

"Sister, a Mademoiselle Herminie de Narcey is, I think, in your convent."

"Yes, brother," answered the attendant; "what would you with her?"

"I am charged by Monsieur Henri to give her this letter. Will you have the kindness to present it to her, after, of course, having submitted it, according to rule, to your worthy superior?"

"I will do so at once," replied the attendant. "Alas! poor dear girl, this letter will afford her great pleasure, especially now when she is so sad."

"Sad? and why?" asked Roger with misgivings.

"At the loss of her dearest friend."

"Her dearest friend?" repeated Roger with increasing alarm; "she has lost her dearest friend, do you say?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, yes," answered the attendant, lifting her eyes heavenward. "The Lord lent her to us, and the Lord has taken her away; it is well, for she was an angel."

"But — but — her best friend," cried Roger, wiping away the perspiration that rolled from his brow; "her best friend, if I mistake not, was —"

"Was Mademoiselle de Beuzerie," replied the attendant; "you knew her, perhaps, dear brother?"

"Constance! Constance!" cried the chevalier. "In heaven's name, go on, go on! What has happened to her?"

"She died three days ago," answered the attendant, "and was buried yesterday."

Roger gave an appalling cry, swerved like a man struck by lightning, and would have fallen his whole length on the pavement had he not been caught in the arms of the Baron d'Anguilhem, who at that moment in turn approached to enter the convent.



## VI.

IN WHICH WE ARE TOLD THAT THE CHEVALIER  
D'ANGUILHEM WAS SO OVERWHELMED WITH GRIEF  
AT THE DEATH OF MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE  
THAT HE RESOLVED TO BECOME A JESUIT.

WHEN the chevalier came to himself, he was lying on a bed in the guest-chamber of an inn, and the Baron d'Anguilhem was sitting by his pillow.

On opening his eyes, he stared about him like a man awaking from sleep and striving to collect his thoughts. Then memory returned. He recalled what had passed at the convent; that, from the lips of the attendant, he had learned of the death of Constance, and how, crushed by the blow, he had fallen into the arms of a man whom he had recognized as his father.

For an instant the chevalier strove to doubt his misfortune; but his own condition, his tutor's clothes lying on a chair, his father, who sat weeping beside him, all were proofs of his misfortune too convincing for him to be able to preserve hope. Turning to the baron, then, with arms outstretched, he cried, —

“Oh! father, I am so unhappy!”

The baron adored his son. He lavished on him all the forms of consolation that are current on such occasions. He reminded him that he was a man, that man was born to suffer, and to this end it was that God had given him strength. It was all good orthodox doctrine; but to it all, however sacred it might be, Roger responded, shaking his head, —

"If my mother were here! if my mother were here!"

"Well, and what would she do that I am not doing?" demanded the baron.

"Oh! she would weep with me!" cried Roger.

And he fell back on his pillow, sobbing aloud.

The baron thought that the best thing to do under the circumstances was to let his son weep his fill. In fact, tears afforded him some relief, and he began to be able to speak of Constance. It was, as one can easily imagine, to multiply questions about her illness and death. The baron merely replied that he knew on the subject only what every one else knew: the young girl had been taken with smallpox, and, in spite of medical science, she had died after six days of suffering.

The chevalier then declared that he wished to visit the convent and see the room in which Constance had lived, and the grave where she lay; that he wished to weep in the one and pray beside the other.

The baron replied that the next morning a *requiem* was to be sung for the repose of the young girl's soul, and if he would promise to conduct himself like a man, and to set out in the afternoon for Anguilhem, he should be present at the *requiem*, and, after leaving the chapel, he should be conducted by the abbess to Constance's cell and then to her tomb.

The chevalier gave his word that he would command himself. As to leaving Chinon, he would do that with all his heart, for he realized how much, in his present condition, he needed his mother's love.

The remainder of the day passed peacefully enough, although sadly. Roger remained in bed, affecting, from time to time, to be asleep. His father, believing that he slept, soon went out on tiptoe, and, finding himself alone, Roger was then able to weep as freely as he wished.

Night fell, and, however unhappy was the chevalier, with the night came a little sleep. He dreamed of Constance, and, strangely enough, instead of beholding the young girl pale and dying on her bed, or white and cold in her coffin, as often as she appeared to him, she seemed to be full of life, with love in her eyes and a smile upon her lips, just as she had been at Anguilhem, at Beuzerie, or at the convent. Then he would awake, his heart beating rapidly; for a few moments, he would doubt his own unhappiness, until the room at the inn, the clerical garb, the step of his father, who occupied the adjoining room, and who, at every sound made by the chevalier, came to the door, all recalled him to the terrible certainty that the death of Constance was itself not a dream.

At daybreak, Roger heard the ringing of the convent bell; it was proclaiming the day's sad rite. Each slow and muffled throb of the tolling bronze found response in the depths of the chevalier's heart.

Another thing distressed him moreover: he had no clothes to wear but those in which he had fled from Amboise, and he could not attend the service dressed like an abbé; his disguise, so grotesque in itself, seemed to square badly with his grief. To run about the country, to carry off Constance in that attire would have worked to a charm, but to listen to the service for the dead and to weep over her tomb, wearing such a costume, would be profanation.

The heart has instinctive delicacies which never lead it astray.

Meanwhile, the baron was entering the chevalier's room, followed by a servant from the château carrying a complete suit of clothes. Thanking his father, Roger asked how he had come by them. The baron replied that the abbé, on arriving at Anguilhem, had

informed the baroness in what equipment her son had escaped, and that the baroness, rightly suspecting that he had run away to see Constance again, and, comprehending her son's embarrassment on reaching Chinon, had immediately sent on this suit. A single fact annoyed Roger: it was that his mother had not brought it herself.

However, the chevalier dressed, for at eight o'clock mass was to be said. To the baron's great astonishment, Roger said not a word to him about Constance. In all his father's answers, the poor lad had been conscious of a degree of coldness and constraint which accorded but ill with the frankness of his own grief. The baron, for his part, dreading, no doubt, to revive his son's regrets, was continually turning the conversation away from the only theme that interested the chevalier. He did not understand that, in crises of the nature of the one that his son was experiencing, the first relief is drawn from tears, and that the way to excite tears is to speak to the sorrowing one of the loss for which they flow.

The baron therefore thought that Roger's affliction was diminished because Roger wept no more. Alas! the tears were flowing inwardly, and falling one by one upon his heart.

Roger set off with his father, and they proceeded to the convent, walking side by side. But, on approaching the door where twice he had presented himself so light of heart, Roger felt the ground swaying beneath his feet; houses, walls, and trees were whirling round him; he was obliged to lean on his father's arm. As for the baron, he was visibly moved, on perceiving which Roger strove to master his own emotion.

On arriving at the door, Roger again met the attendant who had given him the terrible news. Accustomed

as she was to the sight of great human griefs, the poor woman herself seemed affected by the chevalier's pallor and sorrow. And when the latter, as he passed her, secretly slipped a louis into her hand, she could not restrain her tears.

Roger entered the chapel which, a year before, he had entered in such happy-hearted confidence of recognizing Constance's voice from among all the others. A year had passed, and that voice, so pure, so sweet, so thrilling, was hushed; and he was about to listen to all those other voices, among which he would seek in vain for one which now was singing in heaven the praises of the Lord.

The chevalier went to kneel on the very spot where he had knelt a year before, and there, for the first time, he felt that sublime necessity for prayer which comes in times of great grief. There for the first time his soul entered into communion with that other world of which one never catches a glimpse save through a veil of joy or of despair, of which one can conceive only in moments of supreme bliss or of supreme grief.

The entire service passed, and although Roger's tears never ceased to flow down his cheeks, not a sob escaped his breast. Prayer renders weeping easy and soothing.

Mass ended, the baron conducted his son to the superior. Perhaps the worthy nun nursed some rancor toward her nephew for the trick that he had played her before, and that he had quite recently intended to repeat; perhaps she had promised herself to administer some reprimand, kind but stern, for her aspect, at first, was dignified and cold; but she heard a heart-rending cry, —

“O aunt, aunt, why did you let her die?”

She was unable to withstand a grief so real and one which manifested itself by such marked alteration of face and voice. The good superior melted into tears.

Roger took advantage of her mood to remind his father of the promise he had made to ask his aunt's permission for him to visit Constance's cell. The superior raised some little objection, but yielded after having called a nun and, in a low voice, given her a few orders which were doubtless designed to remove from Roger's sight any object that might further excite his grief.

A few moments later, all three descended; the corridors were deserted. It seemed as if death had at a blow depopulated every cell; the girls were in the garden.

The abbess opened the door of Constance's room, and was preparing, like the baron, to follow Roger; but Roger begged them both to allow him to remain alone a moment within the sanctuary of his love. Father and aunt exchanged glances; then, doubtless, seeing no impropriety in his request, they gave a sign to Roger that he might enter.

Roger went in, closed the door behind him that he might be alone, and advanced reverently and with clasped hands toward the bed on which Constance had breathed her last sigh. Nothing indicated that death had passed that way. The chevalier bent over the virgin pillow to imprint thereon a kiss. It still exhaled an odor of the sweet and delicate fragrance that emanates from youth and health. One would have said that she who had left it three days ago for the tomb, had gone out but that very morning to run with tossing hair about some meadow all strewn with flowers and variegated with butterflies and bees.

This contrast between the place and the scene there enacted, of which nothing seemed to have preserved a trace, broke Roger's heart. Thus came home to him the great truth that we are destined to pass away from the earth leaving no trace other than the memory re-

tained by those who have loved us; and yet, how short a time do the most deeply wounded hearts preserve that memory!

Roger vowed that in his the memory of Constance should live forever.

Then he arose, examined one after another all the objects comprising the furnishing of that little room, whose picture he wished his mind to retain. At the left of the entrance, against the wall, were a crucifix and a prie-dieu; on the prie-dieu lay Constance's tiny missal. Roger went and knelt before the prie-dieu, kissed the little volume, opened it at the place where the bookmark showed it to have been opened last, and read the prayer that Constance had undoubtedly read. It was the angelic salutation, the "Ave Maria," that sweet and poetic promise of an angel to a virgin, of heaven to earth, of God to man.

The fireplace was opposite. On the mantel were two porcelain vases overflowing with flowers which, thanks to the water that fed their stems, had survived her who had plucked them. Between the two vases shone a little mirror, a worldly infringement of the convent rules, but one that the superior permitted such of her inmates as were destined to re-enter the world. Roger culled a pansy from each of the half-wilted bouquets, and pressed his lips to the mirror which, unfaithful and forgetful like the rest, was ready to reflect any new face that might pass before it, without retaining a shadow of the angelic one that it had so often reflected.

From the mantel, Roger advanced to the window. As we have said, the window overlooked the garden. It was the one that he had already seen; the young girls gathered there were the same, but with what a difference! Buoyant and gay before, they were now silent

and sad. They did not play; they walked in groups and in retired spots. Alone, quite alone, walked Herminie de Narcey, the faithful friend of poor Constance.

This last sight was the most terrible of all for Roger. There, on those young hearts, those virgin souls, blank pages of the book of life, as yet scarcely opened, was the real impress of the death whose traces Roger had vainly been seeking within; there was the void left in the air by the dove in its heavenward flight.

Just then the door opened. More than a half-hour had elapsed since Roger had entered Constance's room, and, as he did not emerge, his father and his aunt were fearful of some new misfortune brought on by too violent emotion.

With breaking heart Roger left the little room, feeling that he was taking forth memories for a whole lifetime, and yet he was outwardly so calm that, upon asking his aunt, in accordance with the baron's late agreement, to allow him to visit the tomb of Constance, not only did neither the baron nor the superior make any objection, but both offered to accompany him thither.

The convent burial-ground was within the cloister. Roger had therefore barely a hundred steps to take on leaving the room in which Constance had reposed for a time to reach the abode where she would sleep forever. At the entrance of the cloister, as at the door of her room, Roger asked to be alone; grief is devout, tears are ashamed. Alone, then, Roger entered the little graveyard.

Here, as in all convents, was a quadrangle surrounded by columned arcades, enclosing a plot of turf-covered ground whose surface was embossed all over with graves more or less salient, according as the interval elapsed had allowed them to become more or less sunken. On such



a spot especially is felt the march of time, the great leveller under whose tread gradually crumble away the palaces of the living and the tombs of the dead. Slowly Roger advanced toward a mound that was freshly rounded and covered by a slab on which there had not yet been time to inscribe a name. There was no mistaking it, and it was plain that the grave dated from the day named as that of Constance's burial. Roger knelt beside the stone and prayed.

This was his final ordeal, and it lasted until the baron and the superior came for him. He had said good-by to the chapel where Constance had prayed, to the room in which she had lived, to the tomb where she was laid to rest forever. There was nothing to keep him longer at Chinon; so Roger let them lead him away like a child, and after mechanically taking leave of his aunt, he got into the cariole in which his father had travelled, not unresistingly, merely, but even without uttering a word. The journey was more quickly made than the first. In coming, the baron had changed horses three times on the way, at Loches, at Sainte Maure, and at P'ile Bouchard, so that there was no occasion for delay; at each of these places a fresh horse was taken, and by noon of the next day they were at Anguilhem.

During the entire journey, Roger had remained absorbed in the profoundest apathy, without a tear, without a sigh, and almost without feeling. On meeting his mother again, however, the poor child found his tears; but the shock had been too violent; on that same evening fever manifested itself, and Roger fell seriously ill.

Then, in all its admirable devotion was displayed that mother's love, so many proofs of which the baroness had already given her son. As long as Roger was ill, she never left his bedside for a moment, sitting with

him by day, watching beside him at night, speaking of Constance without ceasing, praying and weeping with him, fusing her soul with his, divining all his feelings, anticipating every desire, having no life but his life, no will but his will. Sometimes, when she thought him asleep, Roger would surprise her gazing on him with an expression of infinite tenderness in which he seemed to detect a blending of grief and remorse. Twenty times was he on the point of questioning her as to the peculiar expression that he detected in her eyes; but Roger had not strength enough to be curious. What mattered all the world to him? Constance was not there.

The chevalier's illness was long; then it insensibly drifted into a sombre melancholy more dangerous than the malady whose place it took, for Roger abandoned himself to this melancholy, and, after having submitted to every form of treatment that had been prescribed for the cure of his physical disease, he would do nothing to cure that of his mind. In vain his father proposed riding, hunting, fencing. All the sports of which he had formerly been passionately fond now wearied him to the point of inspiring disgust. His studies were his sole diversion; and, one fine day, to the great amazement of his father and mother, Roger asked to go back to the college of the Jesuits of Amboise.

Whatever sorrow they might have felt at thought of parting with their son in his present state of mind, the baron and the baroness nevertheless welcomed his request with joy. It proved that Roger was again taking up an interest in life. It had been three months since he had expressed any desire whatever, hence his request was met with no denial.

Roger returned then to Amboise, still under the care of his tutor. This time, his father and his mother accom-

panied him, the baroness having desired to make the journey that she might in person commend her son to the reverend Jesuit fathers.

A great disappointment awaited Roger. He had re-entered college during the vacation and had fully expected, at the re-opening, to see his friend Henri de Narcey return; but he waited for him in vain. Henri had completed his course in rhetoric, and his parents, having destined him for the bar, had not thought it best that he should take philosophy. Roger therefore found himself completely isolated with his sorrow.

Then a religious fervor developed within him, no trace of which had manifested itself before the event that had brought it forth from the depths of his heart. Roger passed whole hours within the chapel, praying until he would fall into a kind of ecstasy that usually terminated in a flood of tears. The reverend fathers very soon perceived this tendency, not toward devotional exercises, — Roger was not a practical devotee, he forgot even the hours of the services, to which he had almost always to be summoned, — but toward pious reverie. They comprehended what an excellent recruit for the order would be an exalted soul like that of their young guest, attended by a fertile mind, and one that, in all likelihood, would recover later all the vigor that it had momentarily lost; thus, every kindness, every enticement, every flattery beset Roger. There is an infatuation in religion for young and tender hearts. Roger, to whom Constance had become an angel, directed all his longing toward heaven. The rector was an ingratiating, adroit, eloquent man, fired with that zeal of proselytism which is nowhere so pronounced as in the order of which Ignatius Loyola was the founder. He sent for Roger, sounded his feelings, strengthened his inclination, and managed so successfully

that one fine morning at the end of six months Roger announced to his tutor that he had firmly resolved to join the order of the Jesuits.

As the Abbé Dubuquoi was a member of the order, and as the plan of sending Roger to the college at Amboise had been of his own suggesting, fear seized him lest the chevalier's parents should think that he had been the one to inspire his pupil with this singular notion of taking the vows. Hence he immediately wrote to the baron of what was on foot, begging him to come without loss of time, if he wished to arrive before the reverend fathers had quite taken possession of his son's mind.

The baron realized at a glance the danger threatening Roger; he put Christopher to the cart, and the next morning found him at Amboise.

## VII.

HOW MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE APPEARED BEFORE  
THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM TO DISSUADE HIM  
FROM TAKING THE VOWS.

THE baron found Roger quite cool and very determined. If the project that he had conceived had been the result of excitement, the baron would have entertained some hope that, when the excitement had passed away, the desire engendered of it would have vanished with it; but it was not so, and the matter was becoming very serious, the more serious because of its having occurred at this period of the reign of Louis XIV., or rather of Madame de Maintenon, when all things revolved about religion, and when such powerful protection was given to the heads of churches or the superiors of convents that, in many instances, young men and women of the first families of France had become monks and nuns in spite of the opposition of their relatives. The baron, therefore, could think of no better plan to adopt with the chevalier than persuasion.

And so he tried that; but to all the baron's pleas, Roger responded that he was obeying an inner voice, that it was the voice of conscience, and that, from the moment of losing the only being that held him to earth, he had felt himself drawn by an irresistible vocation.

The baron then addressed the rector of the college and solicited his help to combat the chevalier's resolve; but the rector replied that he would regard it as an offence in

the sight of God to lead away from heaven a soul that was seeking salvation. Therefore all that could be extracted from him was that he would refrain from inciting Roger forward on the course upon which he had of his own accord entered; that he had, moreover, imposed this restraint on himself up to this time, and that he should continue to do so. The baron really could ask no more.

Three or four days were spent in fruitless effort. Finally, toward evening on the fifth day, there came a letter from the baroness who, informed by her husband as to the state of affairs, wrote to entreat the chevalier that he would come and spend a fortnight at Anguilhem before decisively making up his mind, promising the neophyte that if, at the end of this time his determination still held out, she would leave him free to follow his wishes. This request was too motherly and too reasonable for Roger not to accede to it at once.

The next day, after having received the rector's blessing, the future Jesuit set out for Anguilhem in company with the baron and the abbé, the last two cursing from the bottom of their hearts the fatal day when Mademoiselle de Beuzerie first set foot at Anguilhem. Indeed, since that unlucky day, it was plain that everything had been at sixes and sevens in the home until then so tranquil, and whose inmates, formerly the most staid in the province, were now spending their time chasing each other up and down the highways of the land.

The baroness renewed the arguments already tried by the baron; but, despite all her motherly persuasion, she could not vanquish the chevalier's obstinacy. On the other hand, it was in vain that his father talked to him of hunting, riding, and fencing; to all these worldly incitements Roger would reply that they were profane

exercises, not at all becoming in a man who intended to consecrate himself to the Lord. After this rebuff, the baroness, too, began to despair of restoring to her son's mind the ideas which he had formerly entertained as to a gentleman's future, and which the fatal event that we have just related seemed to have effaced from his mind.

Thus, twelve days went by, during which the baroness renewed her pleading, but always in vain. At last she herself had apparently renounced all hope, and Roger was freed from her motherly besetments which, however, he had met with a firmness ever tempered with respect and veneration. The whole of the thirteenth day, therefore, passed in sadness and very nearly in silence; for, as Roger's intention had been the never-ending topic of conversation from the time of his arrival at Anguilhem, as soon as they ceased to speak of that, they knew not of what to speak.

The evening was quieter and more melancholy even than the day had been, and each retired early to his own room. As usual, Roger said his prayer before a large picture representing Christ on Mount Calvary, which, on his last return, already occupied with religious ideas, he had had brought into his bed-chamber from an ancient chapel in the château which had been converted to the uses of a ground-floor cellar. Then, wrought up into one of the fervid ecstasies that sometimes took possession of him after his prayer, he got into bed and very soon fell into that state of somnolence which is neither waking nor sleeping.

On extinguishing his light, Roger had remarked a circumstance due no doubt to chance, but which in his pious fervor he had attributed to one of those special favors which he believed heaven sometimes granted him. A ray of moonlight, falling through an oval aperture made in

the upper part of the shutter that closed his window, lighted up the sacred scene of the picture, placed exactly opposite the foot of his bed. It was with eyes fixed on this picture that Roger had let himself sink gradually into that religious rapture of which we have spoken and which began to fade into somnolence, when it seemed to him that the picture was turning of itself and that a young girl, covered with a long white robe and with veiled face, was substituted, by a slow and almost insensible motion, for the sacred picture; then, when the painting had completely disappeared and the nocturnal ray that had illuminated it shone on the young girl with its soft light, the apparition gently raised her veil, and Roger, trembling with both joy and fear, recognized Constance.

It was indeed she, it was indeed that charming daughter of earth become an angel of heaven; and Roger's first movement was to rise in bed and extend his arms to her, but by a wave of the hand, the shade signified to the youth that he must remain where he was, and in a voice whose every tone vibrated to the depths of her lover's heart, she said, —

“Roger, I have been permitted to come and say that the sacrifice you wish to make to my memory is too great. It is not your destiny to bury yourself in a cloister, but to hand down the name of your fathers which would die with you; therefore renounce, I entreat you, this idea of taking the vows, and if need be, I command you. Adieu, Roger, remember what I say; for I have spoken the will of the Lord.”

At these words, a movement the reverse of that which had brought the white vision to Roger's view took place, and, regaining the position that it had for a moment left, the picture was again seen in the light.



Roger had remained breathless, his brow damp with perspiration and his eyes wildly staring, as long as the vision lasted; but scarcely had it disappeared when, doubting his senses, he leaped out of bed in order to assure himself by touching it that the picture was indeed in its place. Nothing was altered. His hands ran over the frame, the canvas, the wainscoting, and he convinced himself that no one could either have entered or left the room, fastened as it was from within. It was truly then the spirit of Constance that had appeared to him.

We can imagine what the remainder of the night was to Roger. As long as it was dark, he had no doubt as to the reality of the vision; she was there still, present to his sight. He saw again the pale sweet face of his young friend; he heard her gentle voice; he felt, so to speak, reaching toward him, that hand whose imperative movement had commanded his silence and quiescence, and whose gentle gesture had bade him adieu. But, whatever the young man's faith and trust, when the tints of dawn came to chase from his room the solemn and mysterious obscurity of the night, the stones of the fanciful castle erected in a dream fell one by one, and he passed from the profoundest conviction to the most absolute incredulity.

Yet, during the day he was restless, dreamy, pre-occupied. Several times his mother inquired what cause had brought about the change visible in him since the day before, but the baroness obtained no answer save a wan smile full of melancholy. As for the baron, he seemed to have resigned himself to the chevalier's determination, and to have lost all hope of inducing him to renounce his project.

The day passed, however, without anything unusual

occurring. Roger left the château and went for a walk in the little wood surrounding it. Occasionally, quick blushes suffused his countenance, as if the blood were suddenly rushing from his heart to his face; occasionally he would give a start, and his eyes would seem to follow through the grove a fleeing shadow, visible to him alone; then, suddenly, a deep sigh would escape him and two great tears fall from his eyes. That was much for Roger, since, for more than six months, he had not been known to weep.

Roger waited for night with an uneasiness that was mingled with dread. More than once, during the evening meal, his mother, who did not take her eyes from him, saw him furtively wipe away the perspiration that beaded his forehead. At the same hour as on the day before, he asked to be allowed to retire, and he left the dining-room for his bed-chamber.

We have told how, with the daylight, doubt, then incredulity, and finally, the conviction that his spiritual visitant was but a dream, had succeeded each other in Roger's mind; but, in contrary train, with the approach of night, his heart began to resume its faith, and, when he found himself alone in his room, lying in bed, his light extinguished, when he again saw the same moonlight illumine the same picture, all his former certainty returned and the supposed dream again enforced on him its reality.

There was almost an hour of silence, during which nothing stirred and Roger heard only the beating of his heart. For an hour his burning eyes were unavailingly fixed upon the motionless picture; then suddenly the frame seemed to merge into the wainscoting and, as on the night before, the picture receded from his sight. After a moment there was no more doubt, for he began

to distinguish the white robe of Constance, then the young girl distinctly appeared; the miracle of the previous night had again been wrought.

"Roger," she said, "you have not believed my words, and I am permitted to come and repeat them. Roger, abandon this melancholy resolution which brings despair to your family. Roger, I accept not the sacrifice that you would make. You are born for the world and not for the cloister; live for the world and be happy."

Then, as if this time the vision still feared lest doubt should come to efface the impression made by her presence, she detached from her girdle a cluster of pansies like that she had in life let fall in the corridor of the convent at Chinon; and, with the gesture made in waving adieu, she let it fall to the floor.

Roger sprang from his bed; but already the picture was in its place. Not a trace remained of the maiden's apparition, unless it were the bunch of pansies which with an impulse, full at once of joy and fear, an impulse, we must confess, infinitely more worldly than pious, the chevalier carried to his lips.

There was no room for doubt this time; a material, visible, tangible proof of the gracious phantom's passage had remained in Roger's hands. The young man returned to his bed pressing the flowers to his heart, and still expecting some new apparition. But it was in vain.

He was awake with the day. This time, as before, his first impulse was to believe that he had dreamed; but the flowers were there in his hand, faded, but present. Ah! this time, the matter presented an aspect very different from yesterday's; the shade of Constance, wrested from her tomb by a miracle of love, had really been present with him.

On the morrow, Roger was to set out on his return to Amboise; but would the gracious apparition dare to follow him to Amboise, into the midst of that formidable assemblage of black-robed men? Would not going back be to disobey the orders of those lips that he had so loved?

But how could he retract a determination so publicly signified? How, after having resisted every entreaty of his father and his mother, could he himself suggest prolonging his stay at Anguilhem? It was impossible, worse than impossible, it was ridiculous; and Roger, let us say, for it is not our purpose to be eternally sounding his praises, was possessed of almost as much self-respect as love.

The day passed then in mutual constraint. The baron, as usual, seemed reconciled to the separation; but the poor mother did not lose sight of her son. It was plain that only the fear of another refusal restrained her pleadings. On his side, Roger wished nothing better than to be detained; the result was that only an opportunity was needed for them to come to an understanding. The Abbé Dubuquoi supplied the opportunity by asking his pupil at what hour he intended to depart on the next day. Roger endeavored to answer and stammered; the baroness at once threw her arms around his neck, asking if it were really true that he was still determined to forsake her. Then Roger was unable to restrain his tears, tears at once of grief and joy, and, in a low, submissive voice, but to us who know the motive by which he was actuated, full of hypocrisy, he said, —

“Madame, are you not my mother, and should I not obey you? Command me, then, and I will obey.”

The baroness uttered a cry of joy, and hastened through the house proclaiming to all whom she met that her son

would not go until later, and perhaps he would not go at all.

Roger left his parents at the same hour as on the previous evening; he was in haste to return to his room. This time, however, he entered it with a greater, a far more terrible doubt. The phantom had seemed to read his thought, since, on the preceding night, it had come to dissipate his hesitations. Therefore, now that all uncertainty was gone, now that he had indeed decided to follow the commands given him by the spirit of Constance, now that he had even promised his mother that he would not go away, might not the phantom think its mission accomplished, and consider it needless to appear again? It was an anxious thought. Roger was becoming accustomed to that lovely shade, which was at least some amends in default of the substance.

And so, once shut up in his room, Roger lost no time in getting into bed and extinguishing his light; but the moon had begun to wane, so that the illuminating beam, which the night before had been late, was this evening later still. At last, after having lighted up in succession the corner of the room and then the frame, it settled upon the picture: it was the moment so impatiently awaited by the chevalier. Never did invocation fall more earnestly from lips of enchanter than did that which escaped the poor chevalier's when beseeching Constance to appear again, if only for a last time. And the chevalier's prayer was granted.

This time again, as on the night before, and the night before that, the picture disappeared, and the white vision came in its place. Roger uttered a cry of joy.

"Yes, it is I," said the apparition; "it is I, come to say adieu. Adieu, then! You have obeyed the will of the Lord; may the Lord recompense you. Adieu, adieu!"

And while the phantom was disappearing with these words, it seemed to the chevalier that he heard two or three badly stifled sobs, which proved that the dead regretted the new separation as much as the living.

"Oh! no, no!" cried Roger, springing out of bed; "oh! no, not adieu, not adieu! Oh, if I thought I should never see you again, Constance, Constance, I should go mad!"

And Roger fell on his knees at the foot of the picture, his hands held out to the Saviour, entreating him who had suffered to have pity on him who was suffering.

But Roger was invoking only a senseless picture, a speechless canvas. He was alone; the last vibrations of Constance's voice were extinguished; the shade had disappeared.

Then he regained his bed, quite overcome with grief; he had heard Constance's adieu; what he dreaded had happened. That appearance was the last, the stone had fallen back upon the tomb, the stone would never be lifted again.

It seemed to Roger as if he were losing Constance a second time. He passed more than an hour in a state of feverish agitation amounting almost to despair. That thrice repeated adieu, the last two spoken with sobs, kept ringing in his ears, and, without knowing what he spoke, he himself repeated involuntarily, —

"Adieu! adieu!"

Suddenly it seemed to Roger that a sound of light footsteps, an almost inaudible sound, a sound that might betray a sylph walking over the flowers, came from the other side of the wainscoting. Roger rose in bed, despairing, hoping, and trembling at once, his eyes fixed on the picture, now left in obscurity; but, in spite of the dim light, it seemed to him that the frame, which alone stood out in the night,

was again moving ; soon he doubted no longer, the picture was turning.

Constance appeared for the second time ; but this time the apparition left the wainscoted wall, and springing lightly to the floor, ran toward the youth, crying, —

“Roger ! Roger ! I am not dead. Roger ! I am not the spirit of Constance ! I am Constance herself !”

And, simultaneously, the chevalier, almost mad with joy, became sensible of the fact that it was indeed no ghost but a living being that he was holding in his arms.

## VIII.

HOW IT WAS LEARNED AT ANGUILHEM AND AT BEUZERIE THAT THE VICOMTE DE BOUZENOIS, EXCAPTAIN OF THE FRIGATE THETIS, HAD DIED INTESTATE, AND WHAT MODIFICATIONS THE NEWS WROUGHT IN THE PLANS OF THE TWO FAMILIES.

IN few words, Constance acquainted Roger with what had taken place.

THE time which our fugitive had lost in travelling from Amboise to Chinon had given the Abbé Dubuquoi ample time to hasten to Anguilhem and inform the baron and the baroness of the chevalier's new escapade. Thereupon they had rightly conjectured that he was headed for Chinon, and they had considered plans for putting an end to this amorous waywardness which bade fair to leave the parents of the two young people not a moment's repose. The Abbé Dubuquoi had then conceived the happy inspiration of proposing to the baron that Roger should be made to believe that Constance was dead. The baroness, understanding with her mother's heart that such unexpected news would prostrate her son with grief, had for a long time held out against the fraud. Finally she was obliged to yield to the plausible reasoning of her husband, and the baron had set off to take the mother superior into the plot. As it chanced, a nun had died but two days before. Thus every facility was presented for the execution of the plan.

WE have seen how the plan was carried out.



But what they had not been able to foresee was the intensity of the grief excited in the chevalier by this news; and what they had especially been unable to predict was the final decision to which his grief had led.

So, when the news reached Anguilhem that Roger wished to become a Jesuit, the baron and the baroness were reduced to the depths of despair. As we have seen, the baron set out immediately for Amboise, hoping that his paternal influence would restore the chevalier to more rational ideas; but, after the first conversation held with his son, the baron had seen that the resolution was thoroughly grounded in the chevalier's mind, and that nothing in the world would uproot it.

He at once wrote to the baroness to acquaint her with the desperate certainty at which he had just arrived.

And then the baroness also had formed a scheme, — one inspired by her motherly heart, — which was to call to her aid Constance, whom the chevalier believed to be dead, to command the unhappy boy to relinquish his foolish intention. She herself had repaired to Beuzerie. She had so pleaded with the viscountess, so entreated the viscount, that neither was able to withstand the baroness' tears, and they consented that their daughter should seem to return from the other world in order to restore the chevalier to this.

Then the baroness had written to her husband, asking him to exact, at least, that the chevalier should return and spend a fortnight at Anguilhem before taking a final resolution, a request that Roger had been unable to deny his father. We have seen how the first twelve days passed at Anguilhem, and how the chevalier's obstinacy had rendered the intervention of Constance indispensable.

Everything had gone as the parents had desired. The piece of mechanism, prepared by the most skilful carpenter in Loches, had worked to perfection. The baron and the baroness had closely followed the impression made on their son by the successive apparitions of Constance; the third had finally completed the work of the first two. Constance, occupying a room with her mother in one of the remotest corners of the château, had with tears in her eyes and despair in her heart said her last adieux to Roger, when, her grief sweeping away every other consideration, she had herself taken a firm resolve and, profiting by her mother's slumber, she had risen, dressed herself again, gone out on tiptoe, and, rid of the surveillance of those who until then had dictated her speech and curbed her feelings, she sped from corridor to corridor to the place in the wainscoting where she had been accustomed to take her stand, pushed the spring, and appeared to the chevalier, no longer as a shadow, but as an entrancing reality.

Roger was a youth of quick impulses. Dazed for a moment, — as if a dead man should be dragged from his grave, and, on suddenly opening his eyes, he should again behold the sky and find himself restored to life and happiness, — he had only enough strength not to fall crushed beneath the weight of his joy; but, that moment gone, he saw that the opportunity, so long sought by him, had come of its own accord, unique, sudden, fleeting, and he instantly resolved not to let it escape him.

A moment later the chevalier was ready. As for Constance, she had written her lover that her life belonged no longer to herself but to him, and that it was for him to dispose of it. When, therefore, he proposed that they should that very instant fly together, and gain

the nearest village where they could be married, not only did she offer no objection, but she assured him that she was ready to follow him to the end of the earth. The chevalier no longer doubted that he was at last entering upon the conclusion of his romance.

The two immediately set out, gliding along the corridors and down the staircase as noiselessly as two shadows, and at last they reached the court. Roger ran to the stable, saddled Christopher, who had for some time been resting from his past fatigues, but who, always kind and docile, allowed himself to be handled without resistance. Then he partly opened the great gate as quietly as possible, sprang upon Christopher, made Constance get up on a stone block, and forced the horse close enough for her to mount behind him. Then, when the maiden was well established, Roger set off at a gallop.

They kept up this gait for two hours; but, as it was in the month of July, that is, when the days are the longest of the year, at the end of those two hours daylight had begun to appear. Roger then thought it expedient to diminish his speed, since a youth and maiden riding at full gallop must excite suspicion. He observed at the same time, on their right, a village which he recognized as La Chapelle-Saint-Hippolyte, and he turned in the direction of this village.

Of matrimonial procedure Roger had no knowledge but what he had extracted from the fiction of the day. Now, in the romantic tales of the time, all marriages opposed by the parents were solemnized without their knowledge by some good priest of the village, who, acting upon the letter of the Lord's commandment given to our forefathers to increase and multiply, believed himself to be obeying the precept of the Bible in sanctifying as

many marriages as possible. Full of confidence, therefore, Roger proceeded to the parsonage, and, having knocked at the door, which was opened by a plump, kind-looking housekeeper of thirty-five or forty years, he asked to speak with the curé.

The curé was getting ready to say mass, which to Roger seemed a good omen. He explained as briefly as possible to the curé what had brought them, and asked if he could not perform the marriage ceremony forthwith. The good priest smiled at the young man's haste; but he explained that there were a few preparatory formalities to be gone through with, such as confessing, giving their family and baptismal names, swearing that they were not related in any degree prohibited by the church, etc., etc.; that these formalities always necessitated a delay of twenty-four or thirty-six hours; that, consequently, however good his own will in the matter, the marriage blessing could not be pronounced until the morrow or the day after. However, while waiting, the two young people might stay at the parsonage, Roger in the charge of the curé, and Constance in that of his housekeeper. This mischance was very distasteful to Roger, as he insisted most emphatically; but the curé was inflexible and, as he declared that none of his fellow curés would be any more tractable than himself, Roger preferred staying at La Chapelle-Saint-Hippolyte rather than going to another village, a course which, without affording him prompter opportunities, would expose him to recognition, or, at least, to notice.

The curé then went to say mass; and, as he seemed to share Roger's fears, he cautioned the two children against being seen at either door or window. Then, on his return, he proceeded to the usual questions.

The young man declared that his own name was Roger Tancredè d'Anguilhem, and that the young girl's was Aglaé Constance de Beuzerie; that the former was aged seventeen years and five months; the latter, fifteen years lacking eight days. Moreover, they both took oath that they were neither co-sponsors nor cousins nor related, in short, in any degree whatever.

The curé then told them to prepare for confession, each making examination of his conscience, while he himself went to attend to some urgent duties.

On his return the two confessions took place. Needless to say they were those of two children, pure and chaste, and, while confessing the love that until then had led them into such foolish enterprises, neither of them had cause to blush even for a thought.

The double confession seemed completely to reassure the good curé, who until then had not appeared quite free from some uneasiness. Then, under the pretext that it was essential that the two young souls should sin neither in thought nor deed nor by omission during the interval which separated the absolution and the marriage ceremony, he shut Roger in the study that contained his ecclesiastical library, and Constance in his housekeeper's room.

At dinner, however, the two young people came together again. Roger then asked the curé if he thought he could marry them on the next day, to which the worthy man replied that he saw no difficulty unless some obstacle were meanwhile to intervene. This assurance somewhat allayed Roger's uneasiness, and enabled him after dinner to withdraw to the library without much difficulty. There he found a cot which had been made up while he was at table.

The hour of supper arrived. As in the morning, the

two young people again found themselves face to face. Roger was beaming with happiness. After the miracle of resurrection that had been effected, he thought separation no longer possible. Constance was shy and blushing; but joy glinted in luminous sparks from her drooping eyelids; happiness forced a passage with every word that escaped her lips.

After supper the curé said prayers for every one. Then, prayers being over, each retired to his own apartment.

Roger tried to read; but how can one read when a thought goes thrilling through the heart, sweeter, tenderer, more tuneful than any other thought on earth! And yet he read that wondrous poem, the love of Jacob and Rachel; but he discovered that Rachel was of small consequence in comparison with Constance, and he confessed to himself that to deserve Constance he ought to undergo many other proofs than those to which Jacob had been subjected. And besides, it was a way to pass the time quickly, to spend it in dreaming. Eleven o'clock sounded, and at each solemn and measured stroke of the clock, Roger trembled as he thought that in eight hours he would be the husband of Constance.

That sweet thought accompanied him to bed and pursued him during his sleep. He dreamed that it was day, and that some one had entered his room to say that the priest was waiting only for him. Just then it seemed to Roger that he really did see daylight through his half-shut eyelids, and that several voices were speaking loudly near him. The feeling was so real that Roger awoke, and, opening his eyes, found himself face to face with his father.

At sight of him Roger's countenance assumed an ex-

pression of despair that however thoroughly prepared the baron might have been to administer a severe reprimand to the confirmed runaway, he had not the heart to do it, and already discerning the suffering of the man in that poor child's soul, he was satisfied to hold out his hand, as he pronounced the one word, —

“Courage!”

Perhaps Roger might have resisted reproaches, but he could not hold out against indulgence. He cast himself into the baron's arms, asking him if he was going to take him away from Constance. The baron regarded him fixedly, and seeing the anxiety depicted on every feature, he said, —

“Listen: my first word was courage! my second shall be hope!”

“O father, father!” cried Roger; “I have already been so cruelly deceived, that I really can hope no longer.”

“But when we deceived you, Roger,” said the baron, “we were poor, while now —”

“Now, father, are we rich?”

“Possibly,” replied the baron.

“Possibly!” cried Roger, “possibly! What do you mean, father? How can our fortune have changed in a day?”

“Our cousin the Vicomte de Bouzenois is dead. We received the news this morning, the baroness and I.”

“Died naming us his heirs?” eagerly demanded Roger.

“If that were the case, I should not have said that possibly we were rich. I should have said that we were rich to a certainty. The viscount died intestate.”

“Intestate, father?”

“Yes, intestate, chevalier.”

The baron pronounced the word with such emphatic deliberation that the chevalier thought it must be of the highest importance.

"Then what follows?" asked the young man in a faltering voice, for he did not yet see how the death of Monsieur de Bouzenois brought him nearer to Constance.

"This, monsieur," replied the baron. "The succession is open, and is disputed with us only by a son of a former marriage, who pretends that his mother gave her property to Monsieur de Bouzenois only on condition that the entire fortune should revert to himself."

"Well, father?"

"Well, the documents are in the hands of the public administrator. A lawsuit will follow; but Coquenard, my attorney, writes me that we cannot lose the suit if we push it with ever so little activity and intelligence, and, if we gain this lawsuit —"

"If we gain the lawsuit, father —"

"We shall have an income of seventy-five thousand livres, nothing less; and then, Monsieur de Beuzerie does the courting and we do the looking down from the height of grandeur; we, in short, make the sacrifice, in forming an alliance with him."

"O father, father, what hope you hold out!" cried Roger; "what! do you believe, do you think —"

"I know what I believe; I know what I think," said the baron. "The kind curé whom you took into your confidence expedited a messenger to Beuzerie as well as to Anguilhem. Consequently, I met the viscount three leagues from here, hastening after his daughter, just as I was hurrying after you. He was furious at what had happened; but, at the first word I breathed to him of Maître Coquenard's letter he was much appeased,



and has even permitted it to appear that, after the scandal to which your flight with his daughter would not fail to give rise in the neighborhood, he regarded beforehand his marriage project with the Comte de Croisey as broken off."

"O father, father, what are you saying?"

"You understand, monsieur," replied the baron, "it was an appeal to my honor."

"And what did you say, father?"

"I said that between ourselves, as gentlemen, a title was only a title, that the name was everything, and that it was known throughout the province that, although the d'Anguilhems were only barons, they dated from the first crusades, while at the beginning of our great king's reign, the Comte de Croisey's grandfather had been at great pains to prove that he was qualified to enter His Majesty's stables; which was the same as saying that if the Baronne d'Anguilhem were presented at court, she would certainly take precedence of the Marquise de Croisey."

"What did he say?"

"He held out his hand and answered, 'That is true, baron; we will talk of that again.'"

"O monsieur! O father!" exclaimed Roger, "how good you are! And Constance, where is Constance?"

"Constance is with her father, as I am with you. Constance will return to Beuzerie, as we shall return to Anguilhem. I shall pay a visit to the viscount tomorrow, and then we shall talk all this over."

"O father!" said Roger, "lay great stress on my love; say that I adore Constance; say that I cannot live without her; say that—say that I shall die if they take her away from me, say—"

"I shall say that, in all probability, you will one day

have an income of seventy-five thousand livres, and believe me, monsieur, such eloquence will outweigh yours."

"Say what you will, dear father, but obtain an answer from the viscount."

"In this matter let me act," said the baron; "for, rest assured, I know better than you what course to take."

"And — and —" stammered Roger.

"And what?" asked the baron.

"And Constance?"

"Well, and Constance?"

"Shall I not see her again?"

"That, monsieur, is quite impossible. You can now see Mademoiselle de Beuzerie only under the paternal roof, and with the consent of the viscount and the viscountess."

"And do you think, monsieur," ventured Roger, timidly, "that their consent will be long in coming?"

"In three or four days, I hope."

"In three or four days!" said Roger; "alas! that is a very long time."

"And when you thought never to see her again, it was a much longer time, it seems to me."

"And, too," added Roger, "I wished to become a Jesuit."

"Yes, yes, monsieur," said the baron, "yes, I know it, indeed. You had quantities of ideas, each more ingenious than the other; oh! you are a man of resources! We will give your imagination something to do."

"In what way, father?"

"We will tell you at Anguilhem."

And, without the chevalier's being able to gain any

enlightenment from the baron on the scheme in which he seemed to be the chief actor, they both mounted their horses and took the road to the château.

It is unnecessary to add that the baron alone took leave of the good curé, and that Roger by no means begged the favor of bidding him adieu.

IX.

HOW AND ON WHAT TERMS THE MARRIAGE OF MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE WITH THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM CAME NEAR BEING ARRANGED BY THEIR NEXT OF KIN.

THIS was the third time that Roger was returning to Anguilhem after having seen his plans frustrated; but this time, however, he was not returning quite without hope. Notwithstanding Roger's ignorance of the ways of the world, he realized perfectly the change wrought in his projects by the death of Monsieur de Bouzenois, even supposing that, as his father had said, the ex-captain's inheritance were subject to a lawsuit.

Upon his arrival at the château his hopes were redoubled, for the baroness, who was watching for the baron and his son at the tower-window which commanded a view of the surrounding country, descended at sight of them, and appeared at the door with a smiling countenance. Roger spurred his horse directly toward her, dismounted, and cast himself into her arms whispering, —

"Do you, too, hope, mother? Oh! don't deceive me, don't deceive me!"

"Yes, my child, yes, my dear child," returned the baroness; "yes, be tranquil; all will go well."

In fact the baroness, like her husband, had witnessed a metamorphosis. When the viscountess, who had accompanied Constance to Anguilhem, had in the morn-

ing discovered her daughter's flight, she was furiously angry. In the very midst of the explosion of maternal wrath came the letter from Maître Coquenard, announcing to the d'Anguilhems the death of Monsieur de Bouzenois. Now that letter had quieted the viscountess as by magic, and she had appeared incontinently to forget a portion of her grief in sharing the good news that her neighbors had just received. Finally, when the messenger from the curé of La Chapelle-Saint-Hippolyte had arrived at the château all out of breath, announcing that the runaways were at the parsonage, it was almost with a feeling of regret that the viscountess heard that, thanks to the scruples of the good priest, the two children were not married. However, as she was unaware that the same message had been despatched to her husband as well as to the baron, and as she wished to tell the viscount at once of the flight and of the event which made that flight almost good luck, she ordered her horse and coach, which, in order that Roger should not remark her presence, had been left at the farmer's, and she set out for Beuzerie, after having, in her adieux to the baroness, let fall a few words intimating as clearly as possible that a visit from the baron at Beuzerie would not only be well received, but that, under the circumstances, it was regarded by herself as indispensable.

The outlook, therefore, continued to be as favorable in the direction of the viscountess as it had been in the viscount's. As for Constance, the chevalier had reason to know that he could depend on her.

Hence in a general council at which assisted the Abbé Dubuquoi, whose duties were rapidly being converted into a sinecure, it was arranged that the baron should the next day pay a visit to Beuzerie and speak of the marriage or be silent, as circumstances demanded; but

the general opinion, even the abbé's, was that he would incontestably have to bring up the subject of the marriage.

The great day, so impatiently awaited by Roger, came at last. At six o'clock he was up and had awakened his father. But the baron was too punctilious an observer of the proprieties to present himself at Beuzerie before noon. Roger had therefore to curb his impatience, which he did by talking to his mother of Constance.

At nine o'clock, mounted on Christopher, the baron departed. Roger exacted a promise that he would remain at Beuzerie no longer than was strictly necessary for discussing the various conditions relating to his marriage. The baron promised to return by four o'clock in the afternoon.

At two o'clock Roger could stand it no longer. He slung his gamebag across his back, shouldered his gun, untied Castor, who, quite unlike Christopher, had remained for more than a year in a state of repose, and took the road to Beuzerie. When he had gone almost a third of the way, he caught sight of the baron who was coming back at full trot. His gait was a good omen.

A few strides and Roger was at his side.

In fact the news was good, and everything was settled, if not quite to Roger's taste, at least to his father's.

Roger's suit was tacitly approved by the viscount and the viscountess. The next day the entire d'Anguilhem family was to pay a neighborly visit to Beuzerie. The visit was to pass off like any ordinary visit, having no special significance, since the viscount, full of prudence as he was, did not wish his new plans to be suspected. Then, on the day following his visit, or on the second day after it, Roger would leave for Paris, where he would personally superintend the lawsuit, on the issue of

which depended the viscount's final consent. That plan presented the double advantage of placing matters in the hands of the one most interested in their termination, and of keeping Roger at a distance from Constance for a year at least, for in those days the shortest lawsuits were very long. Meanwhile Constance would return to the convent while she awaited her sixteenth year, and Roger his nineteenth. It was the age *de rigueur* for country marriages.

All this contained both good and ill for Roger. He would have preferred to marry first and go afterwards. It seemed to him quite as logical and far more tolerable; and it was with the greatest difficulty in the world that the baron brought him to understand that the thing was impossible, since his marriage was to depend on his gaining the lawsuit. The agreement was, however, so clear and so squarely put, that the chevalier was forced to yield. Roger had therefore about decided to lend himself to this new scheme, when, at half a league from Anguilhem, they met the baroness, who, in company with the abbé, had in turn come to meet her husband and her son.

And again the plan decided upon at the viscount's was set forth by the baron, and, to Roger's great despair, it met with general approval. The poor chevalier was thereupon constrained to surrender. It was settled therefore that they should the next day call on the Beuzeries, and, as there was no time to lose, that the chevalier should set out for Paris in three days.

Yet we must say that Roger was unjust to Providence. After having had Constance positively refused to him, after believing her dead, and wishing to turn Jesuit, he had recovered her again as faithful as ever, and, fortune and happiness in all probability coming

together, he had but to wait a longer or shorter time to become at once a rich nobleman and a happy husband. In this twofold reflection there was matter for real consolation; and Roger, weighing it in the balance of common sense, began to view the future in a rosier light than he had at the baron's first words, gradually losing sight of the departure in thinking of the return.

Then, let us admit, the word Paris has at all periods had a magic ring for provincial ears. Paris is the goal toward which all young and vivacious temperaments strive. For the libertine, Paris is pleasure; for the ambitious, Paris is fame; for the speculator, Paris is fortune. Oftentimes had the word Paris been spoken in Roger's presence, but Roger had never heeded it; for never had he supposed that such an event could arise in his life as that he should have occasion to journey to Paris. But suddenly the unlooked-for event was at hand. The word Paris went ringing through his ears to an accompaniment of the chinking of crowns, a kind of music that is always agreeable, even to the man that is least concerned. In short, that same evening, upon going to bed, Roger confessed to himself that, since he was absolutely forced to be separated from Constance for a certain lapse of time, it was better that the time should be spent in Paris rather than elsewhere.

On the next day the baron and Roger donned their best attire, while the baroness put on the most beautiful of her six gowns. Then, at nine o'clock, all three got into the cariole and set off for Beuzerie.

The visit passed off as had beforehand been planned by the baron and the viscount, that is to say, according to the rigid rules of an almost royal etiquette. There was no mention of what had taken place between the two



young people. Roger and Constance bowed as if they were for the first time being introduced to each other. The baron formally acquainted Monsieur and Madame de Beuzerie of the death of Monsieur de Bouzenois, chevalier by grace of the king and captain of one of his frigates, received the condolences of the viscount and the viscountess, and announced that, the succession having given rise to a great lawsuit, his son, the chevalier, was about to leave for Paris the next day in order to attend to it. The viscount and the viscountess then wished the chevalier complete success in his undertaking, laying great stress on the pleasure they would personally take in his prosperity. Then they in turn let it incidentally be known that their daughter, being still too young to think of any establishment, would return to her convent at Chinon, where she would remain until it was time for her to marry.

These official communications having been exchanged, the baron, the baroness, and the chevalier arose. Then, gravely bowing, they took leave of the viscount and the viscountess, entered the cariole, and went back to Anguilhem.

That evening and the following day were spent in preparations for the chevalier's departure. In the evening, the baron solemnly desired Roger to ascend to his room. Roger understood that he was about to receive the paternal instructions, and he respectfully presented himself before the baron, who received him standing; as for the baroness, she was seated, and it was apparent that she had already wept much, and that she was obliged to summon all her self-control to keep from weeping still.

The chevalier came slowly forward, and when within a few steps of his father, he bent his head.

"My son," said the baron, "you are about to enter what is to you a new and an unknown world. Above all things guard your honor. A gentleman's honor is like a woman's reputation. Once tarnished, it can never be cleared. Above all, then, I repeat, watch over your honor.

"You will form the acquaintance of young men, I will not say nobler than yourself,—any gentleman able to prove his nobility is the equal of any other gentleman,—but of young men more favored than you. In their company, you will find gambling much in vogue. Play only when you cannot do otherwise. You are neither rich enough to be able to lose, nor poor enough to desire to win. In any case, if you have the misfortune to play and lose, sell even your last shirt to pay your debt. Every debt is sacred, but a gaming debt is doubly so.

"We have concluded, the baroness and I, that one hundred louis will be sufficient for all your expenses during the year. Here, then, is the first half of that sum. The pieces are old, for they are our savings of fifteen years. Young and active as you are, you will appear at the court of law; you will bow before judges, you will seek powerful protection, and you will succeed, I hope. Fortune favors the young.

"Every week you will receive from us a detailed letter, which every week you will answer with as exact details. So that, if we gain our suit, you yourself will have been the builder of your own fortune. Then, the lawsuit won, if you marry Constance, of which there can be no doubt, and if the marriage makes your happiness, you will owe your good fortune to no one but yourself, which, in this world, is indeed something.

"You will travel with Christopher. He is a good

animal, hard to tire, well appearing, and he would be better still if you had not overridden him at times. He was shod yesterday. When passing through Saint Aignan, have his mane and tail fashionably clipped. His trappings are neat, his saddle is excellent. -You will find my travelling pistols in the holsters.

"Now, my son, you have sometimes given us pain. We forgive you, your mother and I. For my part, I have caused you much in the matter of that death story. I do not know whether I was justified in causing you that suffering. I think not, for it was a lie, and, even with good intention, a lie is always a lie. I ask God's pardon for it."

"O father! father!" cried Roger, unable to restrain his tears.

"I did not say that to cause you sorrow, Roger," resumed the baron, mistaking the sentiment that had wrested this exclamation from his son. "You have a good heart and a brave one, but your head is bad. Distrust yourself, therefore, even more than others. It is the last advice of your father who loves you. And now," continued the baron, himself deeply moved, "receive our blessing."

Roger fell on his knees, and, with a gesture full of tenderness and paternal dignity, the baron extended his hands, and, with eyes lifted toward heaven, laid them for an instant on his son's head. Rising, Roger cast himself into the arms of his mother.

"Dear child," said the baroness, "go to your room, for I feel that you too have occasion for tears. For the rest, be reassured, as I shall write postscripts to your father's letters."

Roger again kissed his mother, who, without his needing to speak, had responded so quickly to the inmost

thought of his heart. Then, after kissing the hand that his father extended to him, he withdrew to his room and wept, in fact, a good part of the night.

When day came he dressed himself for his journey. The Baron d'Anguilhem had already risen and seen that everything was in readiness. Christopher was saddled and bridled and had a suitably filled portmanteau on behind. With deep emotion, the chevalier observed that the baron's eyes were almost as red as his own.

Breakfast was served, but no one touched it. Every one was weeping or gulping down his grief. The baron was sensible that the sooner an end was put to a situation so melancholy for all, the better it would be. On rising from the table, Roger approached his tutor and asked his forgiveness for all the vexation he had caused him. The poor abbé, wholly selfish in the ordinary occurrences of life, in tones of deep emotion pardoned the thousand and one little peccadilloes committed by his pupil.

Roger went forth, giving his mother his arm and his father his hand. At the doorway he found the house servants weeping bitterly, for every one at Anguilhem worshipped Roger. He kissed them all, as if they were friends, and they wept the more.

Castor yelped aloud and bounded the length of his chain. One would have said the poor animal understood that his master was leaving home for a long time. His master went to him, and Castor stood up with his paws against his breast and kissed him after his own fashion.

The baron and the baroness accompanied their son almost a quarter of a league; and then, as they must stop somewhere, the baron stopped abruptly. This time, being no longer under the solemn restraint of his

father's blessing, Roger cast himself into the baron's arms.

Then came the poor mother's turn. The baroness could not part with her child. Her poor heart was rent with sobs, and in the depths of her soul she cursed the unlucky inheritance that was tearing away her child. The abbé was gazing after them from the window of the tower and waving his handkerchief.

At last the baron took his son by the hand, and, conducting him to his horse, he said, —

"Let us part bravely, my son. Remember that you are eighteen years old, and that, consequently, you are a man."

Roger mounted Christopher, who, with drooping head and tail, seemed to partake of the general depression; but the mother once more ran toward her son with outstretched hands, which he covered with kisses. At last the baron tore his wife away from those endless embraces, and, with all the fortitude he could muster, said to his son, —

"Spur on, monsieur, I command you."

Roger obeyed and was off. At a hundred paces, however, he looked back to see his mother once more. Then, when he saw her lying so helpless and weeping in the baron's arms, he went back, again kissed her, again pressed his father's hand, again galloped away, and five minutes later he had disappeared behind a clump of trees.

Then in his poor heart Roger felt that there remained still other adieux to be said. He would not, he could not, go away without seeing Constance once more. The day on which he was to leave had been mentioned before Constance, and he hoped she had understood that, although it would take him slightly out of his way, he

would pass Beuzerie. He therefore urged Christopher on, and soon, rising beyond the warren, he saw the weather-vanes of the château.

Roger continued to advance, but all the while he kept glancing right and left with a remnant of timidity in the depths of his heart due to the former interdiction of the viscount and the viscountess. At a turn of the road, through the trees, he caught a glimpse of a white dress. He spurred on. It was Constance, who, sitting on the moss with a book in her hand, was pretending to read.

In an instant Roger was beside her, and, springing down from Christopher, he dropped upon his knees.

"Ah! here you are, Roger!" cried the young girl, "I expected you."

"And I, Constance," said Roger, "was sure of finding you."

"You are going then?"

"I must go. You know our happiness is at stake."

"Yes, Roger, yes," said the young girl; "my mother has told me all. Our marriage is set for your return. You are to be rich, it seems. How fortunate I am! I shall owe you everything."

"Oh! you are an angel, Constance," cried Roger. "I too can hardly believe in my future happiness, and I am still afraid lest you escape me."

"It is you, rather, whom I may never see again, you who are going to Paris, and who will forget me in that great city."

"I forget you, Constance? Oh! never, never. If I have no more to fear on your part than you have to fear on mine, I shall indeed be happy."

"And what have you to fear about me?"

"What have I to fear, Constance? I am afraid of losing my lawsuit, and that the viscount will then

withhold his consent and marry you to the Marquis de Croisey."

"I will never marry any one but you, Roger," replied Constance; "and if I am not to be yours I shall be no one's."

"Swear, then, that you will marry only when I myself release you from your oath."

"I swear it."

"That you will believe nothing that is said to you about me unless you have it from my own mouth or see it written by my own hand."

"I swear it," repeated Constance.

"And I," said Roger, "swear in turn —"

But Roger had not time to finish. At that instant a bullet whizzed past, barely ten feet distant from the young people, and the viscount was heard calling to his dogs.

"My father!" cried Constance in terror; "oh, go! go!"

Roger pressed his lips to those of the pale and trembling girl, murmured the word *adieu*, and springing upon Christopher, was off at full speed. After riding a short distance he turned his head. Constance had disappeared.

It then occurred to him that Constance was the only one bound, and that in exchange for the double oath made by her, he had not had time to promise her anything. However, as Roger was a man with a conscience, under his breath he swore to himself the oath that he ought to have sworn aloud.

Poor Roger! poor Constance!

Perhaps, thanks to this imprudent exclamation that has just escaped us, our readers count upon being able to guess beforehand what sad incidents threaten the

future loves of our two young people; but, at the risk of wounding their self-esteem with respect to the penetration of which they believed themselves possessed, we assure them that, whatever their suppositions, they can bear no relation to the strange events which remain for us to tell.



## X.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM MADE HIS ENTRY  
INTO SOCIETY.

IT took eleven days for the chevalier's journey from Anguilhem to Paris. While passing through Saint Aignan he had, in accordance with his father's suggestion, had Christopher groomed and rejuvenated by the first veterinary of the place. At Orléans he had purchased a great coat and renewed the lace of his hat. At Versailles he had longed to stop and visit the court, but on comparing his own state with that of the seigneurs whom he met, he had been abashed by the contrast, and had continued his way, and had thus reached Paris with no stops other than for eating, sleeping, and resting Christopher, all which, as we have said, did not prevent his consuming eleven days on the road.

The chevalier arrived at Paris by way of Chaillot. This entrance to the capital was far from being at that time what it is to-day; hence Roger was not too greatly impressed by what he saw, and he maintained, with regard to the great city, a respectable degree of dignity. Yet he drew rein to admire the stately prison which arose below the convent of the Filles-Sainte-Marie, and which he at first took for a palace; then he followed the Quai de la Savonnerie and entered the Cours-la-Reine. Here, it must be admitted, his astonishment increased. The Louvre was in front of him. The Invalides, with its resplendent dome, was at his right. Then, as it was a fine summer day, a throng of carriages

filled with the handsomest seigneurs and the most elegant dames of the time coursed the thoroughfare at his left. Soon he found himself in the middle of a marble-yard, a vast, roofless atelier where Louis XIV. had the statues hewn with which he made France bristle, and which, extending along the Rue de la Bonne-Morue, covered the very spot to-day occupied by the Place de la Concorde. God rest the souls of those who have substituted stone and iron for the marble and bronze with which it was filled at that epoch!

On arriving at this marble-yard, which obstructed his course, the chevalier was embarrassed to know whether he should turn to the right or the left. He questioned a workman.

"Monsieur," answered the latter, "although your horse looks like a good strong animal, he seems thoroughly tired out. Don't take the quay, then, for the pavement is very bad. Go by the Porte Saint-Honoré. Leave at your left the Filles de la Conception and the Hôtel de Luxembourg; then you will come to the Place Louis-le-Grand; you will readily recognize it. It is a large square with a statue of the king on horseback. It is a good quarter in which to choose a hotel."

The chevalier followed the route and the advice. He found the Place Louis-le-Grand at the point indicated; but, not daring to venture upon staying in so fine a quarter, he kept on his course a little distance beyond, and, finding a hotel of sufficiently modest appearance to seem in keeping with the state of his fortunes, he halted. Its sign was "The Golden Harrow."

With an air quite assured for a provincial, the chevalier cleared the grand entrance, and, being fatigued, he abandoned Christopher to the care of a groom, ascended to a small room on the fifth floor, which was assigned to

him from his appearance, went to bed, went to sleep, and awoke only on the morrow.

The morrow come, his first thought was to go and present to a certain Marquis de Cretté a very strong letter of introduction which his father had received from Monsieur d'Orquinon of a neighboring country-seat. But, as he stood at the window, the chevalier remarked so great a difference between his own toilet and those of the people who passed on horseback and in carriages that he blushed for his own costume, notwithstanding that he had always thought it very gallant in the country. He therefore learned where he could find a dealer in second-hand clothing, whither he immediately repaired, and where he bought a coat that was almost new, a vest still presentable, a pair of clocked stockings, and a sword. Thus transformed, the chevalier, thanks to his excellent personal appearance, was presentable even in Paris, notwithstanding that his sky-blue coat bore a knot of apple-green ribbon on the shoulder, a union of colors that might seem somewhat hazardous, but which was undoubtedly an amorous fancy of its former proprietor. When he was arrayed in his new costume the chevalier thought he had better study the effect of his brisk attire upon less noble material than the marquis and the society that our débutant must meet at his house, and in order to experiment *in animâ vili*, Roger repaired to the house of Maître Coquenard, his father's attorney, Rue du Mouton, near the Place de Grève.

Roger, as we have said, was a handsome fellow, and although from the province, his bearing was that of a gentleman. The country tan would without doubt be recognized upon his rounded face and brawny hands; but he had a well-shaped leg, and from time to time his eye sparkled through his timidity. Yet his sword in-

convenienced him sorely by beating the calves of his legs, for at Anguilhem he had not been in the habit of wearing a sword. The perpetual slapping caused him annoyance. Nor did he know, either, that he should require clowns to give way while he himself should yield the pavement to his superiors. Hence he turned out for a chair-porter, and jostled a man of quality; but his look of surprise saved him from the displeasure of the latter, while his athletic figure spared him the raillery of the former. In fact, as we have said, the chevalier stood five feet and seven or eight inches in height, and was of conformable build, a size which, in every land on earth, always inspires a degree of respect.

Maitre Coquenard received Roger very graciously. And in turn Roger, a gentleman never standing on ceremony, accepted the invitation extended him to share a stewed hare of most delicious aspect, and a hot pâté of most savory odor. They took places at the table without further ceremony, and both began to feast in excellent style, and then they entered upon business matters. In order to deaden as much as possible the force of the blow that he was about to deal him, Maitre Coquenard employed many delicate circumlocutions to inform Roger that the suit at law for the succession, which had brought him to Paris, was of all things the most difficult and the least certain; that, in accepting the right to inherit, the Baron d'Anguilhem was pledged by the very act of that acceptance in the sum of twenty thousand livres charged to the account of the dead man's debts.

Roger was appalled at this preliminary statement.

But this was not all. Maitre Coquenard further explained that the initial expenses of their application during the last eight days already amounted to nine hundred livres.

This time Roger turned pale, and lost his appetite, for under all this, aside from the money lost, lay the contingency of his marrying or not marrying Constance; and we must say to the credit of our hero that, although twelve days had passed since he had left Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, and he had since then seen a goodly stretch of country, and on the day before had gained his first taste of the capital, the maiden's image was as present to his memory as at the moment of his leavetaking.

As for the effect produced on the chevalier's appetite, let us add that the dinner was approaching an end when he learned this news.

Provided with this lugubrious intelligence, Roger re-entered The Golden Harrow with a step much less assured than that with which he had gone forth.

To fulfil the promise made to his father, the chevalier began a letter to him in which he announced his fortunate arrival in Paris, his interview with Monsieur Coquenard, and the unpleasant news that he had gathered at the worthy solicitor's. He terminated his letter by saying that he was at that moment setting out to make use of Monsieur d'Orquinon's letter to the Marquis de Cretté.

In fact, his letter written and confided to the post, the chevalier cast a more critical glance at his toilet, changed his cravat, put on his cuffs, and set off, not without a beating heart, in the direction of the residence of the Marquis de Cretté, situated in the Faubourg Saint Germain, Rue du Four, about two hundred yards from the Hôtel de Montmorency.

The especial cause of the chevalier's quickened pulse was his expectation of meeting a grave old man, severe and formal, after the pattern of Monsieur de Beuzerie, a style that was naturally antipathetic. Then, behind

this grave old man, severe and formal, he could see a crotchety dowager with dull eyes and a shrill voice, and, attending this amiable old couple, a dozen insolent lackeys. There was but one consolation for the chevalier in all this, — that old men are somewhat provincial even in Paris.

But, on arriving at the hôtel, quite contrary to what he had expected, he discovered half a dozen blooded horses, caparisoned in the very latest fashion, held by five or six valets in different liveries, but all of them so brilliant and gay that one could not but suppose that both animals and men belonged to young noblemen thoroughly versed in the fashions of the day; and all this, it must be said, disconcerted Roger far more than the picture of an antique household which he had anticipated finding.

The porter stood erect at the entrance, a three-cornered hat upon his head, a broad baldric across his shoulder, and a cane in his hand, warning off with equally aristocratic gesture both dogs and louts that loitered with gaping jaws and mouths before the gate of the hôtel; but when he saw Roger he carried his hand to his hat with the instinct that tells a lackey that he has to do with a gentleman, and inquired in what way he could serve him. Roger replied that he wished to speak with Monsieur le Marquis de Cretté; whereupon the porter spoke to one of the valets who were holding the horses. The latter made a sign to a tall, ungainly fellow, whose seams were all covered with galloon, who introduced the chevalier into an elegant salon on the ground-floor looking into the court on one side and into the garden on the other.

An instant later six young gentlemen, all of distinguished appearance, jaunty and gay, descended the grand

staircase, leaping four steps at a time. One of them turned aside toward the salon; the five others scattered about the court, each running to the horse that was being held for him.

"Who asked for me?" cried, while still at a distance, the gentleman who had directed his course toward the salon.

"Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem," answered the lackey.

"The Chevalier d'Anguilhem," repeated the young man, as if searching his memory, "I do not know him."

"That is true, monsieur," responded Roger, opening the door himself; "and I beg a thousand pardons for having so ill chosen my time as to arrive just as you are ready to go out; but I pray you to fix yourself a time at which I may have the honor to return."

This was said with a little awkwardness, but also with an amount of dignity that impressed the Marquis de Cretté.

"By no means, monsieur," responded the marquis, "I am quite at your service, now as always. Will you, therefore, kindly tell me to what I owe the honor of your visit?"

These words were accompanied by a bow of exquisite politeness.

"Monsieur le Marquis," answered the chevalier, "I present myself through the kindness of Monsieur d'Orquinon, your friend, I believe, and I wish to deliver a letter from him."

"I have not the honor of knowing Monsieur d'Orquinon personally," returned the marquis; "but he was, I remember, one of my poor father's most intimate friends, of whom I have heard him speak many a time."

"Ah!" thought Roger to himself, "the marquis loves his father. He will not ridicule me very much."

Then, while the marquis broke the seal and read his letter, Roger examined him in turn.

He was a handsome, elegant youth of from twenty-two to twenty-four years of age, rather slight, but of perfect figure, and whose attire might have served as a model of elegance, as his speech, his gestures, his bearing would have served as a model of good manners; a survival, indeed, of the old nobility with an anticipatory graft of the new aristocracy, so soon to bloom in the reign of the regent.

When he had read the letter, he raised his eyes to the chevalier.

"Alas, monsieur," he said, "this letter was addressed to the Marquis de Cretté, my father, whom we have had the misfortune to lose during this last year; but I comprehend that you had not learned of it in the country."

Roger flushed. The phrase, "in the country," brought the blood to his face.

"And yet, monsieur, I think we sent a letter to Orquinon; but this letter which you have done me the honor to bring proves that the death of the Marquis de Cretté has not been heard of down there."

Roger turned redder still than he had on the first occasion. "Down there" sounded to him like the antipodes.

"No matter," continued the marquis, doubtless perceiving the young man's embarrassment, "the son takes the father's place among the friends of our family, and as you have kindly come to see us, you are welcome. Pray count upon me, then, without the least hesitation."

"Monsieur le Marquis, you really overwhelm me. I am only a poor provincial, very ridiculous, I feel, and very tiresome, perhaps, for I have never been outside of



Anguilhem; but, I assure you, I know how to be grateful for your gracious reception."

"But now you overwhelm me in turn, monsieur," responded the marquis as he saluted Roger with a cordiality that penetrated his heart.

Then, turning to his friends who were chatting on the steps, he called, —

"Come, messieurs, if you please, and let me present to you Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem, who is introduced to me by one of my father's most faithful friends."

The young people drew near, and at their approach Roger saluted them with a bow that was not lacking in dignity.

"We are just starting out for Saint Germain, chevalier," said the marquis; "are you at leisure to-day? If so, and if our society is not too disagreeable to you, we shall be delighted to have the honor of yours."

"But, messieurs, you seem to be setting off on horseback," observed Roger.

"Yes, I understand," returned the marquis, "and you came by coach or chaise, and so you have no mount."

"I have my own horse at the hotel," Roger said with a smile; "but, I must confess, in all humility, that he would cut too sorry a figure beside yours for me to risk my poor Christopher in their company."

"What! he is outspoken at his own expense," thought the marquis; "why, the lad is not so provincial as I supposed. Well," he resumed aloud, "we can manage that. I have a horse in the stable, one that we rejected because he is pretty difficult to manage. You shall take my horse and I will mount Marlborough. Besides, as you know, messieurs," added the marquis, laughing, "he owes me revenge. Marlborough has

treated me as his namesake was in the habit of treating Monsieur de Villars. He threw me the other day, flat on my back, as our friend Guérinière says."

"But," timidly remonstrated Roger, "do not inconvenience yourself for me, Monsieur le Marquis."

The marquis mistook his meaning, and, approaching Roger, he asked in a low tone, —

"You ride, do you not, monsieur?"

"A little, Monsieur le Marquis; but you did not understand me. I have the honor to suggest that you mount your usual horse, and permit me, if you will, to ride Marlborough."

"Ah! ah!" ejaculated the marquis, as he gazed in astonishment at Roger.

"Why not?" said Roger; "for my own part, I am a countryman, messieurs. I have ridden a great deal, so much that I do not know whether it is because I understand horses or they understand me, but my seat is very secure. Therefore, have no concern about me, and if my society is not less welcome than it was a moment ago, and you still wish me for a comrade, why, have Marlborough saddled."

"Faith, monsieur, I will not deprive you of the honor. Boisjoli," cried the marquis to one of his men, "saddle Marlborough!"

The groom turned toward the stables, thrusting out his tongue with a wink at his fellows, as if plainly saying, —

"Good! now we shall have some fun."

"But," said the marquis, "you are in shoes and silk hose. You must at least have boots and spurs, certainly."

"I can go to my hotel and get them," replied Roger.

"Where are you staying?"

"Rue Saint Honoré."

"No, it is too far. Rameau-d'or," cried the marquis, addressing another servant, "go to my bootmaker's and have him bring five or six pairs of riding-boots; quickly!"

The valet left.

"Now, my dear chevalier," said the marquis, "you shall know at least where I am taking you. We are having a bachelors' party at Saint Germain's. You see that you have come very opportunely, for I presume that you are not averse, on coming to Paris, to learning how they behave here. Then, your education perfected in this respect, you will go away carrying off your millions, — for you should know, messieurs," continued the marquis, turning to his comrades, "that Monsieur d'Anguilhem comes to Paris, I am informed, to enter into a poor little inheritance of fifteen hundred thousand livres."

"*Peste!*" exclaimed the young men in chorus; "accept our sincere congratulations."

"Take my advice, Monsieur le Chevalier," said one young man with the quick familiarity that obtains among people of rank, "cut that down a figure or two before taking it away, and let us show you how to set about it."

"Ah! *pardieu!* chevalier," cried the Marquis de Cretté; "you may trust that to d'Herbigny; he is past-master in that sort of undertaking. He has already eaten up two uncles and an aunt."

"Come," said another, "who is the worthy defunct that has given up a million and a half?"

"My cousin, Monsieur le Vicomte de Bouzenois," said Roger.

"In that case, my dear chevalier, give me your hand.

We must be of kin to each other, by the left hand. I have succeeded to his last mistress."

"Is your portion worth as much as mine?" asked Roger, shaking his hand.

"Come, come, not so bad!" exclaimed the Marquis de Cretté; "what do you say, Tréville?"

"I say that Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem will give the lie to the saying, 'stupid as a millionaire.' He will be rich and witty: *gaudeant bene nati*."

"Amen," said Cretté. "Chevalier, here come your boots."

Roger accompanied the bootmaker to a small dressing-room.

"Well, messieurs," said the marquis, looking after him as he disappeared, "agree with me that this lad is not at all bad for a provincial. He will bore us much less than we might have expected in the beginning."

Five minutes later Roger emerged from the dressing-room, booted and spurred in a way to have made any courser other than Marlborough tremble. On gaining the steps a groom handed him a riding-whip.

The young gentlemen mounted their horses and Boisjoli led up Marlborough.

He was an admirable dark-bay, with waving mane, fiery nostrils, bloodshot eyes, and slender legs, whose veins stood out and crossed like network. Roger looked him over like a connoisseur, and understood that he had a worthy adversary; nor did he neglect any necessary precaution. He separated and gathered up the reins, settled himself in the stirrups, and then, when he found himself firm in the saddle, he made a sign to Boisjoli to let him go.

It was the moment for which Marlborough was waiting. Scarcely was he free before he began to jump,

to rear, to shy, to execute, in short, all the manœuvres by whose aid he was accustomed to unseat his riders; but this time he had met his master. Roger permitted him for a time to perform all his capricious antics, and contented himself with so accommodating his own movements to them, that horse and rider seemed but one. Then, when he thought the time had come for putting an end to all those whims, he began to make his knees felt so effectually that Marlborough understood that his affairs had reached a crisis. Thereupon, he redoubled his efforts; but this time both whip and spur played their part in such fashion that the horse began to whinny with pain and toss flakes of foam. At last, after ten minutes of desperate struggle, Marlborough recognized that he was vanquished. Roger then amused himself by making him execute circles, as in a training school. Then he put him through a course of paces, of curvettings, and of all, in short, that the famous La Guérinière, the Franconi of the day, was in the habit of teaching to the best broken horses.

Our young gentlemen had at first watched the proceedings with the greatest curiosity, but later with the greatest pleasure. The Marquis de Cretté, especially, was very proud of Roger's triumph; and, when Master Marlborough was entirely quieted, he advanced to congratulate the chevalier, upon which the eulogies of the other young people mingled in chorus.

They started for Saint Germain. All along the way the entire conversation was of the dulness into which the rigorous strictness of Madame de Maintenon and the austerities of Louis XIV. had plunged France. These madcaps invoked all the devils to fly away with the widow Scarron, whom they spoke of only as "the old woman."

There was, indeed, already a party that ridiculed Père Lachaise and his august penitents,—a party that was beginning to rally around the Duc d'Orléans and making opposition to the old order of things; but the faction was very weak as yet, and as it was in great disfavor at Versailles, it was rather hazardous to avow openly that one belonged to it.

Roger, having been raised among the provincial nobility who made, as we have said, a systematic opposition, felt himself quite at home, and took his part quite acceptably in the refrain of maledictions with which they reviled the favorite. He even enriched the subject with ditties of Touraine about Père Lachaise and the directress of Saint Cyr, composed by some wits near Loches. Moreover, he thought he was being very audacious, and was only gay.

But, on the whole, what Roger particularly admired was the way in which these gentlemen trifled with their frills and fingered their ruffles, the exceeding superiority of the cut of their garments, the marvellous choice of stuffs whose colors harmonized so pleasantly, each with another, that this very harmony filled him with dread. He did not believe that he could ever manage so to pinch his waist and yet wear his clothes with such ease. In spite of this naïve admiration, which Roger did not even endeavor to conceal, not a single scoff was aimed at him, for which he was so grateful that he became humble, and sought every opportunity for self-abasement, but he could hardly open his mouth in depreciation of his own alarming costume and his provincial manners before some one of the young people would gently interrupt him.

Arrived at Saint Germain, they ordered dinner, but as an hour at least must pass before the dinner could

be ready, Monsieur de Cretté proposed a game of cards.

Roger trembled on hearing that proposition.

"Alas!" thought he, "these people play as high as three or four pistoles." Poor Roger!

He cast a glance of misgiving at his host, who quickly understood him.

"Messieurs," said the marquis, "perhaps the Chevalier d'Anguilhem does not know our game very well. Let us limit the stakes to twenty louis to give him time to learn it without ruining himself."

At this chivalrous announcement a cold sweat bathed Roger's face.

"Half of all I possess," he said to himself. "I am a lost man!"

Then, in a single second he understood all the vanities of existence. Anguilhem, La Guérite, La Pintade, the economies of a half century heaped in the paternal strong-box, all could be squandered in an hour at cards, and with people who played a small game besides. It was not calculated, it will be agreed, to increase his sense of importance.

Monsieur de Cretté divined that Roger was burning with a desire to speak with him in private. He therefore rose when they began to prepare the table for a game, and sauntered indifferently into the next room. Roger followed him.

"My faith, marquis," said Roger with the frankness that had won the liking of his comrades from the beginning, "I do not wish to sail under false colors among honest men. My father is not rich. He has given me a little money for my journey, and I am afraid—"

"Of losing?"

"No, but of losing too much."

"Nonsense! get rid of that notion, then. One of the qualifications of a gentleman is to be a good player."

"Yes; but to be a good player a man ought not to lose more than he possesses."

"Why not?"

"What, of money?"

"Money? A man always has money, if not in his own pockets, at least in his friends'."

"Excuse me, marquis, but I do not like to borrow."

"You are a child, chevalier. Nobody borrows; everybody plays *en l'air*; that is the way we do. How much do you think we have among us all? A hundred louis, perhaps; but at the bottom of the purse is the word, chevalier, and a gentleman's word is as good as a gold mine. And besides, when a man is playing among honorable men like us, the good luck balances the bad. We play all the year around among ourselves. We win and we lose prodigious sums, and on the thirty-first day of December the unluckiest of us is not more than a hundred pistoles behind. Play, then, fearlessly, lose cheerfully, or I forewarn you that I shall look black."

"I shall do everything in my power to keep in your good graces, marquis," returned Roger, smiling.

"Then come back without farther delay. I hear the gold jingling."

The marquis and Roger re-entered the room; the table was prepared; the game was ready. D'Anguilhem lost his twenty louis in three rounds.

During that one half hour all that terror holds of poignant anguish gripped the chevalier's heart. Yet, although his temples twitched a little, his smile did not fade for an instant. The marquis challenged him to stake anew.



The chevalier drew twenty louis more from his pocket.

At the end of five rounds the chevalier had won back his twenty louis and forty others. Then he began to play cautiously.

"This excellent d'Anguilhem is a veritable monopolist," remarked the Marquis de Cretté as he shoved over to the chevalier some fifteen louis which were his due, and which the chevalier had just won from him with a pair-royal of knaves. "He comes to Paris to get fifteen hundred thousand livres, and wishes to carry off our money besides."

Roger took the hint, thanked his friend by a frank smile, and began to play as freely as when he was losing.

But Roger was in luck. At the end of ten minutes he had three hundred louis stacked in front of him.

It must be said that if the chevalier's terror had been profound, his joy was delirious.

Dinner was announced. D'Anguilhem inwardly thanked heaven for giving him this chance to achieve what is technically called a Charlemagne. Cretté saw the expression of satisfaction that passed over his countenance, slight as it was.

"Chevalier," said the marquis, "you would like us to think you very elated over your winnings, and that is modesty on your part; but I know you. I will wager that you are going to risk your winnings of three hundred louis against d'Herbigny, who has lost four hundred, I think, on the first twenty-one that comes to hand."

As he spoke he gave Roger a significant look.

"You are right, marquis; but as a twenty-one, however, does not occur in every coup, I propose to Monsieur d'Herbigny that we play three hundred louis, one against the other, on the first round and without looking at our cards. We take what we get."

"Agreed!" exclaimed d'Herbigny.

The cards were dealt. No one entered upon the game. The two laid down their cards. Roger had twenty-nine and d'Herbigny thirty.

Roger reddened slightly, but that was all.

"Here are your three hundred louis, vicomte," he said with a laugh.

"You are a very fine player, Monsieur d'Anguilhem," responded d'Herbigny with a bow.

"Accept my compliments, chevalier," said the Comte de Chastellux. "You play like a true gentleman."

"And mine," added the Baron de Tréville.

"And ours," continued the others.

Cretté took his hand, and as he pressed it he murmured in his ear, —

"Well done! A man is known by the way he plays and fights. Keep on as you have begun to-day, and in three months you will be an accomplished cavalier."

"Compliments enough," thought Roger as he rose. "I appear to have done something very fine." But in going from the gaming-table to the dinner-table he heaved a great sigh that nearly strangled him.

The dinner was of the gayest. The Marquis de Cretté and his set piqued themselves on their drinking; but they were, in this respect, mere babes beside their provincial convive. Roger complained in all seriousness that the glasses were small and the wine weak.

"Zounds!" exclaimed d'Herbigny; "you play as well as you ride, and you drink as well as you play. Everything seems to be well done at Anguilhem."

Roger was amazed at finding himself not only equal but even superior in some things to these marvels of elegance.

During the entire dinner the talk was of hunting and

duels and conquests. On the first and last heads the chevalier could relate a sufficient number of feats, although his amours were not of the same sort as those of his new friends. But on the second subject he could boast neither prowess nor triumph. Never had he been engaged in even the smallest duel. Never had he seen one. It was humiliating, and he figured as a rather sulky listener.

The dessert was reached when a second group arrived. Those who comprised it were as noisy on their arrival as were the Marquis de Cretté and his convives at the end of their dinner.

"So we are to have the Messieurs de Kollinski," said the Marquis de Cretté, with an air of vexation that did not escape Roger.

Roger leaned from the window and saw four gentlemen, two of whom, superbly attired in foreign costumes, strutted across the threshold with great boisterousness.

They were two Hungarian gentlemen whose array was so sumptuous as to amount to extravagance. Their luxury was insulting even in that epoch of luxury.

Instantly a hush fell upon the first comers, as if they feared to encourage the familiarity of these last arrivals.

Roger leaned toward the marquis and inquired, —

"Who are the Messieurs de Kollinski?"

"Two honorable Hungarian noblemen who live here after the manner of their country," responded the marquis, "beating landlords, maltreating lackeys, barring the way of passers-by, — all which would be delightful if duelling were not prohibited and so stringently punished. They are brave for that matter. No fault is to be found with them in that respect."

Roger profited by the information.

The Messieurs de Kollinski then entered the great

hall of the inn, and they all courteously saluted one another. But the first compliments were hardly exchanged before the Marquis de Cretté arose, an example that was imitated by the gentlemen of his party, paid the reckoning, and departed, followed by Roger and his other companions.

From the foot of the staircase Roger heard the Messieurs de Kollinski burst into a shout of laughter, and the words "apple-green ribbons" struck his ear several times. Now Roger wore, as we have said, a knot of apple-green ribbons on his shoulder. It was an ornament in very bad taste, especially on a sky-blue coat. Roger was not aware of it in the morning, but he had discerned it by evening. He was, therefore, enraged at the laughers, and he began to detest them from the bottom of his heart. Roger felt that in their eyes he was ridiculous.

Monsieur de Cretté, for his part, had not lost a word of their raillery, for, as he mounted his horse, he exclaimed, —

"*Mon Dieu!* but these Messieurs de Kollinski are provokingly insolent!"

Roger divined that the jest of the Hungarians had been understood by his comrades. He suffered cruelly, but, having said nothing at the moment, he was constrained to swallow his wrath.

Again in Paris, Roger affectionately thanked the marquis for his many kind favors, asked each gentleman present for permission to call on him, and accepted an invitation to make one of a tennis-party on the morrow.

"Remove your apple-green knot," the marquis said to him in an undertone as they separated, "and put on one of poppy-color. It is the fashionable shade."

Roger would have preferred a dagger-thrust to this delicate attention from his new friend.

"Decidedly," thought he, "I was insulted, and I did not demand satisfaction for the insult. Am I, then, a man of no spirit?"

## XI.

HOW THE CHEVALIER PROFITED BY THE FENCING LESSONS GIVEN HIM BY THE BARON D'ANGUILHEM, HIS FATHER.

DURING the whole night, this idea kept Roger awake. He looked at the matter from a hundred standpoints; he thought of a thousand arguments in his own favor; but the sum total remained that he had been jeered at, and he had permitted it. The memory of it spoiled all that day before, so beautiful still to him. This thought, combined with the information given him by Maître Coquenard concerning the state of the lawsuit, was not calculated to conduce to a good night's rest; and so Roger, after having slept an hour or two, awoke in a very bad humor.

However, as he had on the previous day learned the value of a good coat, before taking his chocolate he sent for a tailor and ordered him to have ready, by ten o'clock in the morning, a complete costume made in the best taste that he could command. At ten o'clock the tailor returned to Roger's apartment with a coat of chatoyant taffeta, the cuffs embroidered in silver, a vest of violet gray silk, also embroidered in silver, and knee-breeches like the coat; the rest of the toilet was completed by a neck-scarf of Mechlin lace, embroidered clocked-hose and new buckles; a sword, finer than the one he wore the day before, and having a perfect edge, cocked up in cavalier fashion the left skirt of his coat.

He then frankly confided to the tailor his misgivings as to the manner of creditably carrying off all those beautiful things. The latter, who was an artist, gave him invaluable advice. Roger wished to put it into practice on the instant; he walked away, he turned, he came back before his instructor, who in the end declared himself perfectly satisfied with the way the chevalier caressed his chin and thrust his hat under his left arm; these were the chief things. Roger paid the tailor and dismissed him, already somewhat diverted from the disagreeable thoughts that had engaged his mind during all the night. He set out, then, with a light step for the Rue de Vaugirard where the tennis-court was situated.

Only a single thing was lacking to the perfect gratification of his self-esteem, — to be seen, thus dressed, by Constance; and his regret was the keener as he evidently produced a great sensation upon all whom he encountered, a sensation demonstrated by their turning about and following him with the eye. In fact, no one could understand where this handsome youth with such a self-satisfied air could be going, at ten o'clock in the morning, arrayed as if for a wedding.

Roger arrived first at the rendezvous; the markers executed profound obeisances, which seemed to him to augur well. It was the first time Roger had seen a tennis-court; he had expected to find himself in a Louvre, — he was in a barn, or little better.

So powerful already was caprice in the capital of the civilized world that the fact did not prevent this tennis-court being the most popular one in Paris.

Roger took advantage of the opportunity which he owed to his great punctuality, to gain from the markers some theoretical instruction concerning the course of the game, and some practical lessons as well. As he was

possessed of a quick intelligence, he then and there mastered the order of the play and as he had an accurate eye and a strong wrist, he drove a straight enough ball for a beginner.

In the meantime, Roger's new friends arrived. The chevalier's stupefaction was great; they were in morning breeches and dressing-gowns. Alas! to become a Parisian, the poor chevalier still had much to learn.

The Marquis de Cretté observed his surprise.

"We live in the quarter," said he, "hence we come in like neighbors."

"I," said Roger, "have some visits to make on leaving you, and I dressed beforehand."

"You would have done better to have come in *négligé*," returned the marquis; "you will find that you must go to your hotel from here; this costume will hinder you greatly."

"I did not expect to play," said Roger, biting his lips. "I do not know the game, and —"

"Oh," returned the marquis, "we will knock about the balls a little to put us in breath and give you an inkling of the thing, then we will play a regular game."

At that moment, a noise of ill-omen echoed in the antechamber. Several voices were heard, and among them Roger thought he recognized the voice that had ridiculed the apple-green ribbons on the previous afternoon: he felt a presentiment.

In fact, almost immediately, the Messieurs de Kollinski entered with their two companions of the day before; a cold perspiration gathered upon Roger's forehead.

"Let us make haste and take our places," said the marquis, "or we shall have a dispute with these bullies about who shall play the game."

The marquis removed his dressing-gown, his friends



did the same; Roger, for his part, despoiled himself of coat, vest, and sword.

The game began.

Roger commenced by perpetrating a few of the blunders inseparable from apprenticeship in a game so difficult, and not without shouts of laughter from the spectators. But his play improved, little by little. As a rule, all branches of physical culture are related. Apt in matters requiring skill and address, Roger made visible progress. On the other hand, the strength of his wrist aroused the admiration of his new friends; his balls whistled like cannon-shot, and a man certainly needed courage to be a third against him.

The young gentlemen were greatly amused to see the display of most unlooked-for expedients on the part of that powerful creature. Sometimes, in order to take a ball far above his head, Roger took such a leap into the air that one would have said a spring-board was under his feet; sometimes, to make a hit, he would shoot forward or dart backward with a strength of limb and a calculation of distance that were amazing in a beginner; nor did his friends withhold their eulogies. Roger was exultant.

The onlookers seemed less entertained. The Messieurs de Kollinski had come to play, and they discovered that the game of the Marquis de Cretté lasted rather too long to suit their convenience. For that reason, by way of passing the time, and while his brother sneered with his usual impertinence, Monsieur de Kollinski the elder placed himself where he could throw the balls into the pockets (*blouses*).

As the transaction took place on the Marquis de Cretté's side, it was to him that it seemed particularly disagreeable.

Meanwhile, the Marquis de Cretté became more and

more annoyed, and paid so much less attention to his play that with his increased annoyance he began to lose.

The Marquis de Cretté was a good-natured player when he lost by his own fault or by that of people whom he liked; but he was quick-tempered when he lost through others, if the others were people whom he disliked. And so, another ball being pocketed by Monsieur de Kollinski, the Marquis de Cretté lost his temper.

"*Parbleu!* monsieur," turning toward the meddler, "you pocket my balls and cause me to lose. That probably amuses you, but for my part, I fail to find it amusing."

"Very well, marquis; then I will pocket monsieur's," said the Hungarian as he passed to Roger's side.

Roger cast a questioning glance at the marquis, to which the marquis responded by a significant look.

"You may, if monsieur permits it," said the Marquis de Cretté.

"Ah! but I shall not permit it," said Roger, with an indescribable beating of the heart, as he took a few steps toward Monsieur de Kollinski.

"Look!" exclaimed the Hungarian, "here is the man of the apple-green knot. Why are you not wearing your apple-green ribbon, friend?"

Roger felt the blood mount to his temples, and yet he stood as if nailed to the spot.

He tried to reply to Monsieur de Kollinski, but his tongue was paralyzed.

"It is true that monsieur has no longer his apple-green knot," spoke up the Marquis de Cretté, "but he has a new sword."

The words were as the spark that touches off the keg of powder.

Roger approached close to Monsieur de Kollinski, and bowing gravely, he added, —

“Yes, monsieur, a new sword with which I shall have the honor to run you through the body, if that will be agreeable to you.”

All present burst into a loud laugh on hearing Roger’s unique challenge. Monsieur de Kollinski was about to reply in his usual noisy manner, but the Vicomte d’Herbigny had also approached him; placing a finger on his lips, he said, —

“Not in public, messieurs, I beg; we shall meet again.”

The Hungarians saluted, turned, and went to the foot of the hall, where they began to laugh maliciously together.

“Why, what is the matter, chevalier?” said the marquis in a low tone to Roger, who, after the rush of blood to his face, had turned very pale; “one would say that you were ill!”

“No, monsieur; but I am somewhat disturbed.”

“Is your disturbance of such a nature as to keep you from fighting if we need a fourth?”

“Keep me from fighting, — me?” returned Roger, bearing in mind his father’s instructions. “I will fight ten times, if necessary, and against ten men, if you think proper; but there is something going on inside of me that is stronger than I am, and I tremble. It is rage, I think.”

The marquis smiled at the simplicity with which Roger described his sensations.

“Do you fence?” he asked.

“Oh yes, a little.”

“Who is your master?”

“My father taught me.”

"*Diable!* then you are not likely to accomplish any great things."

"I think I can defend myself."

"If only you could draw a sword as well as you ride!"

"Why, I hope I am as skilful at least at the one exercise as at the other."

"Fact?"

"Yes; but I have fenced only with foils."

"And you do not know how you will fight when once on the ground?"

"I know that I will fight, that is all, and without drawing back a step, I promise you."

"Ah! if you promise that," answered the marquis, "I am tranquil."

"I promise."

"Very well!"

The marquis donned his dressing-gown, adjusted his neck-scarf, and went to find the two brothers who were sitting on the markers' bench with their two friends, and who arose at his approach.

The gentlemen exchanged the usual civilities. The Messieurs de Kollinski had grown perfectly polite. It was quite simple; they were going to fight.

They fixed upon a rendezvous for four o'clock, and agreed to meet at the rear of the convent of the Filles-du-Saint-Sacrement.

Our four young men returned to the hôtel of the Marquis de Cretté.

"Faith, messieurs, this is a serious affair," said the marquis throwing himself on a sofa, and by a sign inviting his companions to do likewise.

"Why do you say that?" demanded d'Herbigny.

"Well! my dear vicomte, the Messieurs de Kollinski are absolutely determined to fight four against four."

"Well, are there not four of us?" said Tréville.

"Undoubtedly, baron; but for the second day that we have been together, I should be glad to keep the chevalier out of this business."

"And why me, more than another?" demanded Roger.

"Because, chevalier, a first affair — is a first affair."

"*Ah ça!* perhaps you Parisians, then, have discovered the way to begin with a second," returned Roger.

"No, not yet, it is true," said Cretté with a laugh.

"In that case, make use of me, I beg, monsieur," replied the chevalier; "if it is a matter of getting a sword-thrust, why, the deuce! I am as good as another."

"Very good!" exclaimed d'Herbigny. "That is the sort of talk I like."

"I will answer for the chevalier," declared Tréville.

"Chevalier, if we get out of this," said Cretté, "you shall be my friend. But do not deceive yourself. The Messieurs de Kollinski are accomplished duellists; they have fought with rapiers in their country from the time of Charles IX."

"Well, what of that, marquis? However terrible they may be, we will try to make up their party."

"So be it, then; but you are forewarned. There is still time for you to withdraw honorably, chevalier; and in your stead we can resort to Clos-Renaud who has a pretty stroke."

"I shall be greatly chagrined, marquis, if you repeat what you have just said. I am at your service and that of our Hungarians."

"Well, messieurs, at four o'clock, this evening," said Cretté. "Let us make our wills, for in all probability we shall have a warm time of it. Come with me, Roger, and I will give you a good sword; what you have there is only a hilt."

The marquis took leave of his companions, and he conducted Roger to a species of armory where there were swords of every magnitude, with hilts adapted to different hands.

Roger chose like an expert: he took a handsome blade, neither too long nor too short, not too heavy nor too light, a three-edged *carlet* as sharp as a needle, which widened a little fourteen or fifteen inches from the hilt in such a way as to give strength in parrying.

The marquis keenly observed the chevalier while he was making his choice.

"Come, come," he said; "I see that you have good enough judgment. Toss your sword into a corner,—it is good for nothing,—and put this one in its place. Excellent! This evening, behind the convent of the Filles-du-Saint-Sacrement, you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"Wait for me; I will call for you as I pass. Or, rather, on second thoughts, be here at two; we will have a bite together."

"You overwhelm me, marquis."

"There, there, don't use that word again; it is not current among friends, and it smells of Loches six leagues away."

Once returned to his hotel and shut within his room, Roger gave way to very lugubrious reflections. That remark about their wills, dropped by way of advice by the Marquis de Cretté, kept running through his head.

"*Parbleu!*" he exclaimed, "it would be an odd thing if I have come from Loches to Paris just to get myself killed."

With that, the chevalier rested his elbow on the table, leaned his head on his hand, and began to think of Con-

stance, of his mother, of the baron, of the delights of his native province, so real, and yet appreciated only when distant, whose reality was felt only when wanting; then he wrote a few pages to Constance, and to his father and mother, weeping quite openly as he went on writing.

He wept so much that he could at last weep no more; and besides, there was a magnificent sky, the sun shot across the window-bars a long stream of light, in which played millions of motes. Death does not look so ugly in fine weather; it has been remarked that many more people have been brave in August than in December.

Roger, therefore, tossed his head, took up the marquis' sword and unsheathed it; it weighed, in his robust hand, scarcely more than a foil. He drew at the wall, and went through a few exceedingly swift and vigorous passes in quarte and tierce; in short, he was in the end well pleased with himself, being convinced that he had lost none of his skill, although he had not touched a foil for nearly eighteen months.

By two o'clock he returned to the hôtel of the marquis. Cretté was awaiting him in the armory with d'Herbigny and Tréville.

A table was spread; on the table were some cutlets, a pâté, and two bottles only of old wine.

At the sight the chevalier declared that, having had only his chocolate at nine o'clock in the morning, he was literally perishing of hunger.

The three others chimed in chorus.

The repast was as gay as if they were to set out for the opera on leaving the table. Yet from time to time the chevalier felt a nervous spasm seize his heart; but the sensation was merely transient, nor was it strong enough to banish the smile from his lips.

They sat an hour at the table; but they drank not a

glassful more than the two bottles. The four friends embraced at the dessert.

"Listen, chevalier," said d'Herbigny, who passed for the best swordsman among the young gentlemen composing the Marquis de Cretté's set. "It was easy to see yesterday when you rode Marlborough, and to-day when you were playing tennis, that your legs are of iron and your arms of steel; do you flail that blackamoor of a Kollinski, for I am pretty certain that he will wish to deal with you,—and it is quite natural, since you so gallantly offered to run him through with your sword. He employs feints. Break his wrist for him, disable him, then you will have the advantage."

"In my second duel," responded the chevalier, "I will do that, perhaps, for, as my father has always told me, breaking a wrist is not running away; but in my first, *pardieu!* I will not recede a step, and, to make sure, I warn you that if there is a wall, I will set my back to it."

"That's right! then he can pin you like a butterfly to the wainscot. No boasting, my dear fellow; remember that when he has finished with you, he will fall on our backs."

"I will try to give him enough to attend to without meddling in your little affairs," replied Roger.

"Amen!" was d'Herbigny's response.

"Amen!" repeated Cretté and Tréville.

All three put on their swords; the chevalier had not taken off his; then they entered a carriage.

Arrived at the corner of the convent of the Filles-du-Saint-Sacrement, Cretté pulled the strap; the coachman drew up; a little jockey sitting beside him descended and opened the door.

"You are to wait here, Basque," said the marquis,



"to see if any one comes, as we shall probably have much more need of a carriage returning than coming."

The four young men sprang to the ground.

"Well, how do you feel, Roger?" asked the marquis.

"I? I feel marvellously well, and to do credit to the company I am in, I would fight with the devil in person."

A second carriage arrived. Our young people's four adversaries descended. They were the Messieurs de Kollinski, the Comte de Gorkaün, a Saxon, and Monsieur de Bardane, an officer of the light-horse.

They advanced toward the Marquis de Cretté and saluted.

It befell with regard to Roger as Monsieur d'Herbigny had anticipated. The elder Kollinski was bent upon fighting him, and as Roger on his part wished to fight Kollinski, the discussion was not long.

The rest of the match was arranged as follows: the Marquis de Cretté engaged Kollinski the younger, d'Herbigny was content with Monsieur de Bardane, and Tréville with the Saxon.

They put themselves on guard, and as they were liable to interruption at any moment, they immediately crossed weapons.

The Marquis de Cretté received a sword-thrust in the wrist, d'Herbigny slew outright Monsieur de Bardane, and Tréville was killed by the Comte de Gorkaün.

As for Roger, he was, without suspecting it, a first-class swordsman; as he had promised, he did not yield a step. On the other hand, he lunged at his adversary three times: the first time, with a straight thrust, and he pierced his cheek; the second, with a parry and thrust, and he made a hole in his neck; the third, with a feint, and he ran him through the breast.

Monsieur de Kollinski, the elder, fell.

"*Peste!*" cried Cretté, who was sitting on the grass, "what a battering-ram that fellow is! he would break down a wall."

Seeing his brother fall, the younger Kollinski sprang at Roger, but his way was barred by d'Herbigny.

"One moment, monsieur," said d'Herbigny to the Hungarian. "If you are willing, I shall have the honor of serving you in the same fashion that my friend Roger has served monsieur, your brother."

And with that, he put aside Roger, who was rushing forward, maintaining that as he had begun with the family he wished to stay by it; but there was no time to continue the discussion.

The Saxon was upon him.

"Bardon, my dear monsieur," he was saying, "but I think not we should stand with folded arms."

"Unfold your arms, then," retorted Roger, resuming his guard.

"Be quick, be quick, messieurs!" cried Cretté; "Basque is signalling that some one is coming."

"Attend, attend," said Roger; "parry that!"

He lunged, and ran his sword through Comte de Gorkaün's shoulder.

"Monsieur," said the latter, gravely, "if ever you should come to Dresden, I shall be enchanted to entertain you."

"Monsieur," returned Roger, alive to the compliment, "you may count upon having my first visit."

The two adversaries saluted.

During this time the younger Kollinski and d'Herbigny were interchanging thrusts; d'Herbigny ran Kollinski through the hip, and Kollinski scratched his adversary's thigh.

At the summons of the Marquis de Cretté, the car-

riage came up at a gallop. Basque and Monsieur de Kollinski's coachman grouped Monsieur de Bardane and the Vicomte de Tréville together in such a manner that they might be supposed to have slain each other; the elder Kollinski, who was still alive, was borne to his carriage; his brother and the Saxon took their places beside him, and the carriage set off with the horses at a run. For their part, Cretté, d'Herbigny, and Roger sprang lightly into their own coach, and the horses bore them away at full speed.

"My dear chevalier," said the marquis, "I ask for your friendship, and in all sincerity offer you mine."

"And I, too," added d'Herbigny.

"You overwhelm me," was Roger's response.

"Roger, Roger," protested the marquis, "you know very well that you have agreed not to use that word to me again. *Sacredieu!* how my wrist pains me!"

"And poor Tréville," said d'Herbigny; "to think that I owed him two hundred pistoles!"

"What would you have, my dear fellow?" said the marquis; "that account is settled."

And all three re-entered the hôtel of the Marquis de Cretté, whence d'Herbigny and Roger did not emerge until after nightfall.

XII.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM BECOMES AC-  
QUAINTED WITH THE SON OF THE EAST INDIAN,  
AND THE KIND OF PERSON HE FINDS HIM TO BE.

ALL these adventures had passed with the swiftness of a dream.

Roger had had time to live, it is true; but he had scarcely had leisure to perceive that he was living. He discussed this phenomenal activity with the Marquis de Cretté.

"My dear fellow," said the marquis, "that is the way we live in Paris. However, we shall lose our evening to-night, or I shall, at least, as my wrist will prevent my going out. But as for you, your two wrists are very sound. You can worthily employ your time from now to midnight."

"No, thank you," said Roger; "I shall not be sorry to return to my hotel. However, at the rate at which I am going, and with the example that I have before my eyes, I hope that in a week I shall be an accomplished cavalier."

"*Pardieu!* I can well believe that. You are not recognizable after these two days. Yet there is really one thing more urgent than the dinners at Saint Germain, the games of tennis at the Rue de Vaugirard, and the promenades back of the convent of the Filles-du-Saint-Sacrement. That is your lawsuit, and I advise you to attend to it."

"Such is my intention, indeed," replied d'Anguilhem; "and to-morrow I shall set about it."

"You understand, my dear fellow, that for all your business I place either coach or horse at your disposal. Only let me know every morning your hour and your wishes, and one or the other, as you choose, shall be at your door."

"And do you think I shall win my suit?" asked Roger.

"Ah! bless me, my dear fellow, you are asking more than I know. Were you to ask if I thought you could break Bucephalus, I should answer yes; whether I thought you could spit Berthelot and Boisrobert, our best fencing-masters, I should say it is quite possible; but, *peste!* my dear friend, a judge is not to be won over as a horse is broken or a man is killed. There are attorneys, tipstaves, counsellors, chief justices, administrators, creditors, a world of big-wigs, a hell of dirty rascals. You must first try to get the names of all these fellows. Then you will tell me, and then we will contrive to beguile some of them with fine words, and to bribe others with money."

"As for the fine words that is all very well," returned Roger; "and I am in funds so far as they are concerned. I studied rhetoric with the Abbé Dubuquoi, who is an intellectual fellow, and philosophy with the Jesuits of Amboise; but as for money, that is another thing. My father gave me fifty louis for six months' expenses, and in two days I have already made away with twenty pistoles."

"Well, my dear fellow, I have told you that among gentlemen there need be no anxiety about such matters. Help yourself from my purse. I have an income of sixty thousand livres, and if it were not for my steward

I should scarcely get rid of it. Take it, my dear fellow, take it. You shall pay it all back when you are a millionaire."

"And if I lose my suit?" demurred Roger.

"Well, what of that, chevalier? You would not need to hang yourself! We will take what is left of your money and sit down to a card-table. One cannot always lose. Fortune will owe you revenge, and she will give it to you."

"All that is rather precarious, my dear marquis, and I confess that the future does not look very rosy."

"Ah, yes! You have great reason to complain, it seems to me. What should Bardane and Tréville say if you are not satisfied? By the way, my dear Roger, if you are questioned on the subject, don't fail to say that they quarrelled at tennis, and that they ran each other through. If some busybody asks how you know, say that I told you."

"Very well," said Roger; and he prepared to leave.

"And one word more. Send to Kollinski's to-morrow morning to learn whether he is dead or alive. You certainly owe him that. If he is dead, rest his soul! all is over. If not, send every day until he either passes away or is cured. Did you not give the Saxon a little scratch, too?"

"I believe I ran him through the shoulder."

"Ah! you believe! Well, kill two birds with one stone, and send to both places at the same time."

"But their addresses?"

"Petitpas will take them to you in the morning."

"Who is Petitpas?"

"A messenger of mine."

"Well, a good-night to you, marquis."

"Thanks for the wish, but I am skeptical. My wrist

pains me as if possessed. That beast of a Kollinski might have given me a thrust somewhere else! What brutes those Hungarians are! Well, good-night, my friend, you know what to expect from to-day, — for life, for death between us."

On his way to his hôtel Roger reflected that, even if he had not killed, he had severely injured that day, a man; and he was astonished, in spite of the behests of God and the church, which command us to love our neighbor as ourselves, — he was astonished, I say, that he experienced no great amount of remorse.

More than that, when he saw Monsieur de Kollinski fall, far from any regret whatever, he had felt a sensation of the keenest joy, so true is it that the instinct of self-preservation overrides every other sentiment.

However, one fact came to Roger's relief in the midst of the low opinion that he was forming of himself, — the fact that between his two friends scarcely had mention been made of poor Tréville who had been slain, save that, as we have said, after his death, d'Herbigny had recalled his indebtedness to him of a hundred louis, a circumstance that, perhaps, might not have been so faithfully recalled to mind had Tréville lived.

And yet Cretté and d'Herbigny had been intimately acquainted with Tréville for ten or twelve years.

But, on the other hand, Tréville undoubtedly had a father, a mother, a sweetheart, whom his death would plunge into deep mourning. Roger shuddered when he thought that he, too, had all these, and that it had been quite possible that, at the very time when he was making these reflections, he himself, Roger, might have been lying in Tréville's place.

The thought made the chevalier double his speed, for

he was in great haste to write to Anguilhem and pour out to those he loved all the sentiments of which his heart was full.

Roger wrote indeed to his father and to his mother. He was so happy that his joy broke over him in floods. It is such a delight to live when one has but just escaped death, and when to the happiness of preservation is added the pride of triumph! Then, still another thing helped to reassure Roger. He would never hereafter feel that beating of the heart which is the uncertainty of the brave. He knew his own skill, and others knew it.

He entreated his mother not to forget that, after the love he bore her and his father, the one and only sentiment of his heart was for Mademoiselle de Beuzerie. He begged that she would let it be known in the country that, being admitted to the intimacy of the Marquis de Cretté, he was starting out in Paris in good shape. Then he described in detail his costumes, slipped in a few words about his rising reputation, and asked if the other fifty louis could not be forwarded soon. At the last came a postscript of a page and a half in length for Constance.

In his letter to the baron, — for the chevalier would have regarded it as sacrilege to confound his heart affairs with business matters, — in his letter to the baron Roger explained at length the apprehensions of Maître Coque-nard. He outlined the critical position in which the case involved the little fortune of Anguilhem, and, as at bottom the conceited youth, convinced that nothing could now withstand him, did not doubt of winning his suit, he took pleasure in exaggerating the difficulties that he might seem the more gloriously victorious.

The postscript of this second letter was consecrated to



Christopher, who was living at ease and on the fat of the land in the stables of The Golden Harrow.

Yet the business which had brought Roger to Paris was in progress. Monsieur de Bouzenois had died of an apoplectic attack without signifying by word or writing his intentions, for the worthy gentleman had believed himself still to have ten or twelve good years of life ahead. His hôtel, in the Place Louis-le-Grand, was suddenly deserted. The son of the East Indian, — thus the woman was always spoken of whom the Vicomte de Bouzenois had brought from beyond the sea, — the son of the East Indian, I say, had come forward to take possession, but as he had neither title nor established rights, the seals had been put on the house, and the property sequestered.

Roger had promised himself to visit the hôtel at the very first opportunity. He therefore took advantage of the occasion when he was leaving his card at Monsieur de Kollinski's, who lived in the Rue des Capucines, and Monsieur le Comte de Gorkaün's, who resided in the neighborhood of La Ferme-des-Mathurins, to pause, in passing, in front of his future property.

He recognized it by the uninhabited appearance of its sealed doors and windows: It was a grand and handsome hôtel which might of itself have been worth three hundred thousand livres, an enormous sum in those days. Roger remarked a stone escutcheon upon which was graven the dead man's coat of arms, and upon which he promised himself that his own should be graven as soon as the probable winning of his suit would permit his vanity that little gratification. To be brief, he came and went before the hôtel in order to view it under every aspect, when he noticed a gentleman who, having arrived at almost the same time as he, was performing the same

manœuvres with an air as preoccupied as his own. For that reason he observed the gentleman the more attentively.

He was a man to whom it was almost impossible to assign a definite age, although it was evident that it must lie between twenty-five and forty years. An orange-yellow hue overspread his face and even encroached upon the whites of his eyes. He had small white teeth, jet-black hair, a coat whose seams were covered with lace, and whose color was most striking, two watch-chains, and rings on every finger. At the other side of the street there waited for him a great gilded coach, on the box of which sat a coachman still yellower than he. To the door clung a valet in the costume of a Lascar who was yellower still than the coachman.

At the same time that Roger appeared to remark this strange-looking personage, the latter also seemed to observe Roger. Both repeatedly and successively conveyed their glances from the hôtel to the other and from the other to the hôtel. Then the great door of the hôtel aforesaid being half-opened to give passage to a sort of steward habited in black, the two observers hastened to the doorway at the same moment and thrust their heads into the opening, and that, too, with such precipitation that their heads met in collision.

Roger, who was very well-bred, offered apologies to the unknown. As for the unknown, he gave utterance to a sort of low growl which might have been interpreted to mean, —

“The deuce! that rascal is no soft-pate.”

Thereupon both together exclaimed, —

“My faith, this is a fine hôtel!”

“Is it not so, monsieur?”

"That is my opinion," was the stranger's response.

"And when the grass that is beginning to dot the court has been weeded out — "

"And when a coat of paint has been given to the shutters and doors — "

"And when all is enlivened in the daytime by handsome carriages and horses — "

"Illumined at night by a thousand lights — "

"Faith! I shall have one of the most magnificent hôtels in Paris," declared Roger.

"Your pardon, monsieur," said the stranger; "you mean to say that I shall have one of the most magnificent hôtels in Paris."

"Not at all. I did not say you; I said *I*."

"But who, pray, are you? "

"I am the cousin of Monsieur de Bouzenois."

"And I, monsieur, am his stepson."

"What! you are the Indian? "

"And you are the provincial? "

"Monsieur," said Roger, "the word is not polite. I am from the province, it is true, but I am not provincial for all that. I am the friend of Monsieur le Marquis de Cretté, of Monsieur le Vicomte d'Herbigny, of Monsieur le Chevalier de Clos-Renaud, and yesterday I gave three sword-thrusts to a Hungarian who was a head taller than you."

"Well, monsieur, what do you mean by that? "

"I mean, monsieur," replied Roger, "that as I have had the honor of meeting you, I shall do myself the honor of making you a proposition."

"Of compromise? "

"Yes, monsieur, of compromise."

"Of what nature? Proceed."

"It is this. Come around with me to the rear of the

convent of the Filles-du-Saint-Sacrement, and as man's judgment is always fallible, let us, like the chevaliers of old, confide the decision of our suit to the judgment of God."

"Why, you are proposing a duel!" cried the Indian, turning from orange-yellow to pale yellow.

"If you kill me," continued Roger, "the hôtel is yours beyond dispute. If I kill you that is the end of the lawsuit."

"Excuse me, monsieur," replied the Indian, regaining his coach; "I am sure of winning my suit, but I am not sure of giving you a sword-thrust. We will abide then, if you are willing, by the judgment of man."

And the Indian entered his coach and set off at full speed, after closing it even to the sashes of the doors.

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed Roger, "there goes an original!"

And he proceeded to inscribe his name at Monsieur de Kollinski's, who was still alive, and at the Comte de Gorkaün's, who was as comfortable as circumstances permitted.

After which he returned to report to the Marquis de Cretté, to whom he also related his conversation with the Indian.

The marquis suffered constant pain from his wrist, which, however, had not prevented his paying two or three morning calls in order to mislead people who might have heard that he had fought and had been wounded. The precaution was not unnecessary, for the duel of the preceding day had made a great stir, but as it had been impossible to lay hands upon any one, and as the two dead men had maintained the profoundest silence, no one was compromised.

Nothing, therefore, prevented the marquis from tak-

ing up the chevalier's case, and making his visits along with him.

There were three chief judges and the *conseiller-rapporteur*.

The chevalier and the marquis began by visiting the judges. They were three eccentrics, having each a decided liking for different animals. One adored his cat, another his ape, the third his parrot. The chevalier was very friendly with the three judges, and the marquis was very attentive to the three animals; but as soon as either of them wished to broach the subject of the suit, the judges gave the gentlemen to understand that they would much prefer to speak of other matters.

As to the *conseiller-rapporteur*, he was a Puritan, and so austere that he refused even to receive them.

"*Peste !*" exclaimed the marquis; "it looks to me like a bad omen."

However, they learned one fine morning that the case was evoked at the Palais. Two months had rolled by, for it had required at least two months to draw up the official report, to complete the inventories, and to investigate the relative titles of the claimants. During all this time Roger had debated whether it were not best to effect a compromise with the son of the East Indian. But the marquis was opposed to all overtures of such a nature, while the Indian everywhere announced that his case was not at all doubtful, and that he could furnish the court a document so authentic that the Messieurs d'Anguilhem, father and son, would, to their confusion, find their pretensions overruled.

Meanwhile the business dragged on at its usual pace. Justice is not only blind, but halt and lame as well. The chevalier felt a keen distaste for all these excursions to the Palais and the Saint-Chapelle. However,

every eighth day found his coach, or rather, the Marquis de Cretté's coach, in the neighborhood, — the day, usually, after the baron's weekly letter.

Had not Roger been in some sort the guest of the Marquis de Cretté, had he not found in him friend, banker, and adviser all in one, he might of necessity have resolved to proffer a compromise to the son of the Indienne, who was waging the war with plenty of money.

But that unfortunate "authentic" document especially tormented Roger. As for the Baron d'Anguilhem, to whom every new letter from his son brought a new subject for anxiety, he no longer slept.

"Try," he always wrote, "to discover what that vaunted document is, whether it is an entail, a will, or a deed of gift."

Roger sought and found not.

He assembled his council, composed of the Marquis de Cretté, d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, and Chastellux, to learn what he should do. He had been told of one *Sieur Viellère*, who engaged in all sorts of clandestine transactions, such as gaining information from secret papers, gauging the contents of hermetically sealed boxes, or the abstraction even of deeds and titles. It is clearly to be understood that it was not now proposed to steal the document from the other party, but to procure a copy in order to aid the advocates in defeating it. The council of gentlemen unanimously repelled this proposition as dishonorable.

One day d'Herbigny thought that he had discovered a means of assisting matters. As he was passing the *Porte de la Conférence* he recognized, from the description that Roger had given of him, the Indian, who was coming through the gate in his coach with a woman who

had once been the viscount's mistress, and who was, it would appear, on the best of terms with Roger's adversary. Like a devoted friend, d'Herbigny believed that here was a chance to terminate the lawsuit in which languished the fortunes and the peace of Anguilhem.

Thereupon he made a sign to the coachman to stop, very impudently approached the door, staring meanwhile at the lady who belonged to the Comédie-Française and was called Mademoiselle Poussette. Mademoiselle Poussette, recognizing the viscount of whom she had once been very fond, smiled affectionately.

"*Pardieu!* monsieur and madame," said d'Herbigny, "what say you to a little supper for us three? It seems to me that we should enjoy it —"

"I do not know you," sharply replied the Indian, whose eyes turned perfectly yellow, "and I do not eat with strangers."

"But madame knows me, and she will tell you that I belong to good society. Poussette, my dear," continued d'Herbigny, "I beg that you will do me the favor of presenting me to monsieur."

"Let me introduce Monsieur le Vicomte d'Herbigny," said Poussette, laughing at her old lover's impertinence.

"Ah! very good — d'Herbigny — d'Herbigny," repeated the Indian. "I remember that name. You are a friend of that little d'Anguilhem, and you have come to pick a quarrel with me in order to secure his succession to Monsieur de Bouzenois' estate. Try that elsewhere; my fine gentleman. My lawyer has warned me against such accidents!"

"I have the honor to be one of the friends of Monsieur d'Anguilhem, who, by the way, is a head taller than you or I. But you have put upon me a mortal affront by attributing to me such an intention. And so,

monsieur, I regard you as an ill-bred savage, and I beg you to state when and where my seconds may confer with yours."

"Good! you persist in your purpose, only you take another road. You are still bent upon a quarrel. Well, let me win my case, and then we shall see about it."

This conclusion seemed such a burlesque to d'Herbigny that he burst out laughing.

"*Pardieu!*" he exclaimed to the Malabar, "you are a good-natured Indian, and I should be delighted to have supper with you, only for the pleasure of making your further acquaintance. If you are so agreeable when fasting, you must be charming when drunk."

"Another way of inheriting," returned the Indian. "You would poison me."

"Ah! you are a buffalo!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Poussette. "I will not remain an instant longer in your coach. Open the door, vicomte. I will have supper with you."

D'Herbigny opened the door and Mademoiselle Poussette leaped to the pavement. Then, after taking leave of the nabob, the one with a bow, the other with a courtesy, they walked away together, arm in arm.

And then Mademoiselle Poussette informed him that the other was the most ridiculous man that she had ever seen; that he could talk of nothing but his inheritance, saw on all sides only emissaries of the chevalier, and that he had this very day demanded of the criminal lieutenant an escort, which he was on the point of obtaining.

This seemed important to d'Herbigny, who, on leaving Mademoiselle Poussette's the next morning, hastened to the Marquis de Cretté's and related the circumstance



to him. The marquis augured from it that the Indian had already expended a great deal of money, without counting that he was besides undoubtedly supported by the Naval Department, with which Monsieur de Bouzenois had been on excellent terms.

In his last letter Roger had acquainted his father with these unpleasant details.

Day by day the indications became more alarming. Soon a rumor was spread that the son of the East Indian had exhibited to the three judges the document upon which he relied for the support of his pretensions, and that the three judges had assured him of the successful issue of his cause. This news fell like a thunder-bolt on the Anguilhem party. The matter began to be regarded as desperate by the little group of gentlemen. They were already considering how to raise the money necessary to defray the enormous expenses of the examination, and the damages likely to be awarded to Monsieur de Bouzenois' stepson, for the Baron d'Anguilhem had appeared as plaintiff in the case. The expenses were estimated at six thousand livres. In addition Maître Coquenard laid claim to an honorarium of four thousand livres. Roger's sojourn, with the advances made by his friends, had cost almost five thousand livres. The case being lost, nothing would remain to the baron of all his little fortune, and the day was approaching when the sad truth was about to be revealed to him.

The Marquis de Cretté's behavior toward Roger was perfect under the circumstances. He offered him ten thousand crowns payable at his convenience; but Roger replied that neither he nor his father could accept a sum which they knew in advance that they would be unable to repay. He then declared that he would meet the

blow with his own resources, and that in case of necessity he would enlist in one of the regiments setting out for Flanders.

D'Herbigny, too, did everything in his power. Thanks to his influence with Mademoiselle Poussette, he prevailed on her to return to the Indian, in order to make sure of the existence of that document, and if the document had no existence, to discover on what resources Roger's adversary relied.

As for Roger, he sought out his advocates, Maitre Branchu and Maitre Verniquet, and begged them to overlook nothing in their pleadings; but, despite all the vanity natural to practitioners, they shook their heads and deplored having been retained in such a bad cause. Roger was urgent, and they confessed that the three judges to whom they had spoken had left them little ground for hope. They advised Roger to go back and make desperate overtures to the cat, the ape, and the parrot, which were such delights to those respectable jurists. But it was advice given as doctors prescribe health resorts, — that they should not have to reproach themselves with negligence of any sort. Had they known, they said, that the defence was in possession of a title which, it was asserted, could be supported, nothing in the world could have induced them to take charge of his case. Roger, who neither dared nor was able to promise them mountains of gold, hung his head before these alarming previsions, and as he was only his father's man of business, he faithfully transmitted to him all that was unpleasant in the lawyers' reluctant attitude.

But it was in his letter to his mother that his despair burst forth. To her he deplored not only the loss of the suit and the consequent loss of his fortune, but that

most cruel loss of all, the loss of Constance. For, amid all his dinners, his duels, his drives, and his visits, to the chevalier's credit let us say, the image of Constance had not for a moment left his heart.

He confided to Cretté the advice given him by his counsel to attempt a last assault upon the judges. He stuffed his pockets with cakes for the cat, almonds for the ape, and macaroons for the parrot; but, far from being sensible of these attentions, the cat scratched him, the ape bit him, and the parrot called him a country lout.

"You are a ruined man!" exclaimed the marquis, on leaving the house of the third judge. "You will lose with costs."

That evening the conduct of the jurists and their respective pets was explained to Roger and his companions by Mademoiselle Poussette. As the judges were men of probity, they would not have been willing to accept bribes. But the Indian had given a ring worth two thousand pistoles to the cat, had donated ten thousand crowns to the ape, and had bestowed a life-annuity of three thousand livres upon the parrot.

As to the *conseiller-rapporteur*, all attentions had been thrown away upon him. His door had been constantly closed against the Indian as well as Roger, and no one knew of any beast, savage or domestic, to which one could offer jewelled rings, make donations, or present life-annuities.

Roger and the marquis tried a last attack upon him, but with no greater success than had attended the first.

Such an upright man was Maître Bouteau, the *conseiller-rapporteur*!

As may be supposed, all these successive disappointments had, in spite of his light-hearted nature, gradually

led the chevalier into a deep melancholy. The prospect of the ruin of his entire family, of the loss of Constance, whom he had found again only to be separated from her the second time yet more cruelly than the first, and of enlistment as a simple volunteer in the Royal-Italien, the Picardie, or the Nivernais, all held nothing but despair. The chevalier, too, abandoned himself to hopelessness, and was unwilling to listen to any consolation. He refused all the diversions proposed by his friends in their efforts to distract his mind, and spent his time in his room at The Golden Harrow writing to his mother or composing elegies to Constance. For we must add that, as a last misfortune along with the melancholy, a taste for poetry had come upon him.

## XIII.

HOW, JUST AS THE CHEVALIER HAD FALLEN A PREY TO THE PROFOUNDDEST DESPAIR, A STRANGER VISITED HIM TO MAKE A PROPOSITION NOT EXPECTED BY HIM NOR BY THE READER.

ONE morning, while Roger was viewing himself in a small mirror to see how grief became him, and was at the same time putting the finishing touches to a very bad, but excessively tender, quatrain intended for Mademoiselle Constance de Beuzerie, just as he had hit upon a rhyme sufficiently exquisite to end the last line, there came three knocks at his chamber-door.

"Come in," answered d'Anguilhem.

The door slowly opened, and the person who had knocked entered.

He was a man whose countenance bore a strong resemblance to the fox; he was evidently an habitué of the Palais, a sort of hanger-on, a rat of La Sainte-Chapelle. During the four months that Roger had been frequenting the Salle des Pas-Perdus he had learned to recognize the lowest tool of Themis by his claw-like fingers and hooked beak.

The visitor had red hair which was plastered upon the forehead, a great purple wart on each cheek, an eye as changing as the opal, a great void between the teeth of the upper jaw, and a sharp chin, the underside of which hollowed out rather than projected upward from the throat.

"Good!" exclaimed Roger to himself, "here is some new exploit adduced for my benefit; if it should be necessary to pay the expense at once, I shall have to part with my last pistole. No matter, let us put on a bold face."

And, with a moderately firm bearing, he awaited the man with the warts.

The man with the warts bowed profoundly.

"Have I the honor to address Monsieur Roger Tancrède, Chevalier d'Anguilhem, of La Guérite, La Pin-tade, and other estates?"

Roger reflected that were he still lord of all those seigneuries, he was on the road to be disembarrassed of them, a reflection which, although he was astonished at the preamble, did not prevent his replying quite steadily, —

"Yes, monsieur, I am he."

"Is there nobody," continued the man with the warts, "who might be concealed in the closet that I observe back of your alcove?"

"Nobody, monsieur," replied Roger; "and permit me to remark that the question seems a strange one."

"Yet nothing could be simpler, monsieur; you might have had with you either a mistress or a friend. You are too handsome a fellow and too good a comrade to be wanting either. You might, I say, have had with you a mistress or a friend, and, in order to receive me more at your ease, have employed the closet as a place of concealment."

"I was alone, monsieur," insisted the chevalier, "and that closet is quite solitary."

"Will you permit me to assure myself?" returned the man with the warts.

"*Parbleu!* monsieur; it appears strange that you do not believe my word."

"Oh! I believe you, monsieur le chevalier," said the unknown, slowly edging his way toward the closet, "I believe you, for I know you to be a man of honor; however, without your permission or your knowledge, some indiscreet person may have slipped in —"

And the visitor partly opened the door and thrust in his little weasel-like head.

"Well," said he, "nobody is here."

"What the deuce can this queer individual wish with me?" the chevalier asked himself.

"And the walls," continued the man with the warts, "are they thick?"

"My faith! go and examine them, monsieur," cried d'Anguilhem; "you are really beginning to try my patience."

"Don't fly into a passion, monsieur, don't fly into a passion. I very humbly ask your pardon for taking all these precautions; but you will presently understand that they are strictly necessary."

"Then, proceed, monsieur, proceed; look into the wardrobes, under my bed, behind the curtains, and, if you wish the keys of the commode and the secretary, ask for them, — make yourself quite at home."

The unknown profited by the permission, opening the wardrobes, looking under the bed, searching behind the curtains, and casting a scrutinizing glance at the two pieces of furniture aforesaid, to assure himself that they were not of a shape to conceal a lurking listener; but as both undoubtedly seemed too restricted to be employed for such a purpose, he politely declined by a wave of his hand the keys which Roger had already drawn from his pocket, and which, upon this refusal, he replaced.

"Now, monsieur le chevalier," said the unknown, "now that I am quite sure that we are alone, I have the

honor to beg you to listen to me seriously, for I have come to speak to you on a matter of the highest importance."

"Good or bad?"

"Take your choice," answered the man with the warts; "it will be what you make it."

And he went to the door, turned the key, and shot the two bolts.

Roger cast a furtive glance at the fauteuil where lay his sword, beginning to think, like the Indian, that some one might have been despatched to do him an ill turn.

The man with the warts intercepted the glance, endeavored to reassure Roger at once by smile and gesture, and advanced a chair to the fauteuil in which Roger was sitting.

By an involuntary movement, Roger pushed back his chair.

The stranger remarked this second movement, as he had already remarked the first, and indulged in a hideous little smile as if to say, "Yes, yes, I see indeed that you have no great confidence in me; but wait a little."

Roger waited. The man with the warts cast a look around him, as if the certainty of being alone with the chevalier could not satisfy him, and bending toward his ear, he said, —

"Monsieur, have you any repugnance to marriage?"

"To marriage?" echoed Roger, with stupefaction.

"To marriage," repeated the stranger, wagging his head with the same hideous smile that seemed habitual to him.

"But to what marriage?" demanded Roger.

"How! to what marriage? why, a real marriage."

"I do not understand," said Roger; "but pray go on."

"Then," said the stranger, "I will put the question differently."



"Proceed, monsieur."

"Do you wish to win your suit?"

"*Têtebleu!* I should say so," cried Roger, "and very much indeed."

"Well, well," returned the man with the warts, smiling his peculiar smile, "we shall come to an understanding."

"Let us hear," said Roger, as he imparted a slight movement to his fauteuil.

"Well, monsieur," continued the unknown, "I am the man that can put you in a way to win that suit of yours. Ah!"

In his enthusiasm, Roger was drawing close to the man with the hideous smile, and seemed as if ready to put his arms around his neck.

Poor human nature, which thinks it has sympathies and antipathies, and has only interests!

"What is to be done?" demanded Roger.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* almost nothing," replied the stranger.

"But what?"

"You must marry."

Roger scanned this man a second time, but more narrowly than at first, and he began to conceive the idea that he had to do with a lunatic.

"I shall be fortunate if he does not grow violent," thought Roger.

Then, as the silence was prolonged, Roger having contented himself with the mental observation, and this response not sufficing the man with the warts, the latter demanded, —

"Well?"

"You say, then —" hazarded Roger.

"I say, Monsieur d'Anguilhem, that you must marry."

"I marry? I?"

"You yourself, in person; another would not answer at all!"

"Come, now, you are jesting!" exclaimed Roger.

"Had I the honor to be better known to you," replied the messenger of Hymen, "you would know, monsieur, that I never jest."

"Then, the question becomes serious?"

"Extremely serious, monsieur. I beg, therefore, that you will consider it from that point of view."

"And so I must marry?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* yes."

"And whom?" demanded Roger with an effort.

"Ah! whom?" returned the man with the warts, with a repetition of that horrible smile; "ah! whom? There you let slip the great question!"

"Certainly, whom?" repeated Roger. "Do you think, indeed, that I will marry with my head in a bag?"

"It is just the way that you must marry, Monsieur d'Anguilhem."

"Are you quite sure that you are in your right mind?" demanded Roger.

"What! Am I quite sure?"

"Yes; because, if not, as the joke might be carried on a long time in this vein, I must confess that I am pressed for time. I have an engagement, and I should like at once to terminate the game we are playing."

"It is no game; not the least in the world, monsieur," replied the stranger with a very serious air. "Or, if it is a game, it is one, at least, in which your entire future is at stake, since you can win fifteen hundred thousand livres."

"Then, for God's sake, monsieur," returned Roger, "explain yourself more clearly."

"Are you in love?" demanded the man with the warts, as he fixed upon Roger his little opaline eyes, whose regard seemed to the latter literally to penetrate the depths of his soul.

"As for that," said Roger, blushing deeply, "you must excuse me, monsieur, from replying."

"Since you demand that I respect your secret, monsieur," retorted the unknown, "I have the same right to demand that you respect mine."

"But you, — it is very different."

"In what way?"

"You should tell me, me especially —"

"On the contrary, monsieur le chevalier, you are the last person whom I should tell. However, I do not forbid your guessing."

"Ah! that is very kind; thanks for the permission, monsieur; unfortunately, I am not good at enigmas."

"In that case, it is a study that you should enter upon, since, for my part, I can only repeat what I have already said."

"Monsieur," said Roger, rising, "you understand —"

"Yes, monsieur, I understand that you are a disinterested person," interrupted the stranger, rising also, "and it matters little to you whether you lose or win your suit. A bagatelle, after all, for a gentleman like you, — only a sum of fifteen hundred thousand livres, more or less."

"*Peste!*" exclaimed Roger, "a bagatelle! not at all, monsieur. I do not regard it in that light; but, frankly, just consider: certainly I cannot marry thus, — it is absurd!"

"Monsieur, monsieur," said the stranger with an air of profound commiseration for Roger's ignorance, "I tell you that you do not know what you are refusing."

"But, in short, monsieur, if I should consent to consider the proposition, what is to be done?"

"A proposition of this sort, monsieur, once considered, must be carried out."

"Then it is a positive contract that you require?"

"Positive."

"And I agree to marry —"

"The name is blank."

"This is not common sense."

"Yet permit —"

"Never, monsieur, never!"

"That is your last word?"

"The last, — it is final."

"Reflect again."

"I have reflected, or rather, I will not reflect on such an absurdity. I to marry? I, without knowing whom, without having seen my intended, without having spoken to her, without knowing whether she is young or old, beautiful or ugly, stupid or intellectual! Come, come, my dear man, you are losing your head!"

"And you, your suit, monsieur!"

And the stranger took his hat.

This devil of a man possessed so much assurance that Roger was disconcerted. He strode about the room; he paced from alcove to window, from door to commode, and at last fell back into his arm-chair with a stealthy glance at his interlocutor, who, with the most natural manner in the world, was alternately scratching his warts and his chin.

"What!" exclaimed Roger, the first to break the silence, "what! monsieur, do you absolutely refuse to give me even the least information?"

"Upon my honor, monsieur, I am willing," answered the stranger, "but I am expressly forbidden."

"Only tell me if the young person — h'm!" broke off Roger, "— but is she young?"

The unknown continued to scratch his warts.

"Come, — is she beautiful or ugly?"

The unknown passed from his warts to his chin.

"But certainly I shall be permitted to inquire whether my fiancée is maid or widow."

The unknown remained impassive.

"Ah!" exclaimed Roger, striking his forehead, "it would be a mad thing to do!"

"I will give you until to-morrow, monsieur, to reflect on my proposition," said the stranger.

"And to-morrow?"

"To-morrow I will return at this hour."

"Alone?"

"No; I will bring the contract with me."

"The contract?"

"Oh, that binds you to nothing," said the unknown; "you will not sign it unless you like. Be tranquil, my gentleman," added he with his habitual smile, "you will not be kidnapped."

So saying, the mysterious man backed out, bowing still lower than he had done on entering, and when he was far away, Roger still sat, dismayed, his brow, humid with perspiration, held between his hot and trembling hands.

XIV.

HOW THE MYSTERIOUS MAN APPEARS A SECOND TIME, AND HOW, IN THIS SECOND INTERVIEW, MATTERS SEEM A LITTLE CLEARER.

ROGER remained some time under the weight of the blow that had just been dealt him; but at last, gathering himself together, he rose, took his hat, and hastened to the Marquis de Cretté, his staunch support, his constant resource.

Happily, the marquis was at home.

"What is the matter?" he cried, on seeing the chevalier. "Have you lost your suit?"

The marquis put this question to the chevalier, so agitated was the other's countenance.

"No, thank God, not yet," answered Roger. "The decision is to be rendered, you know, in three days; and I even —"

"Even what?" repeated the marquis.

"I even have some hope of winning," continued Roger with a sigh.

"It seems to me that there is nothing in that to call for such a sigh as you have just given."

"Of course it seems so to you; you know nothing of the conditions."

"Ah! there are conditions?"

"Alas!" exclaimed Roger.

And he threw himself into his friend's arms.

"Come, speak," cried the marquis; "you really alarm me."

The chevalier then told the marquis of his interview with the man of the opaline eyes. Cretté listened to the recital with the greatest attention; then, when the chevalier had ended, he exclaimed, —

"This is a queer piece of business! Is it some bastard of Bouzenois' that they wish to provide for, — or, *grand Dieu!* my poor friend, it may be —"

"May be what?" cried the chevalier, turning pale at the marquis' forebodings.

"It may be that the old begum herself thinks of marrying again."

Roger shivered to the very marrow of his bones; but one reflection reassured him.

"Impossible," said he; "she is dead."

"Then it is improbable that you have anything to fear from that source."

"For all that," said Roger, "I have known of people who were thought dead, but they came back."

"Ah! *mon Dieu!*" ejaculated the marquis.

"However," continued d'Anguilhem, "I do not think it is so, in this case."

"Then let us seek for some other solution. What if it were a snare of your opponent's? What do you say?"

"I have thought of that; but what interest could Monsieur Afghano have in getting me married?"

We forgot to say that the Indian answered to the name of Afghano.

"No one knows; you must distrust him always."

"Yes, certainly I distrust him; but my distrust will not gain me a day longer. To-morrow I must give an answer of some sort."

"Consult your father."

"But my father is fifty leagues from here; besides, I must confess, marquis, I do not see how I can marry in

such a way. I idolize a young girl in my part of the country, a love, an angel, one who is attached to me with an affection equal to mine for her, and who will die if I marry another."

"Do you think so?" said Cretté, putting out his lips with a skeptical air.

"I am sure of it; I have her word."

"As to dying?"

"No, but as to her living for me alone."

And then Roger related to the marquis all his adventures with Constance, but without pronouncing the latter's name.

"What can you do, my dear fellow? After that, you have no chance to reflect. Do you love mademoiselle — is it indiscreet to ask mademoiselle's name?"

"No; her name is Constance de Beuzerie."

"The deuce! the first name is suggestive, I admit."

"You were asking — ?"

"I was asking if you love Mademoiselle de Beuzerie more than you love an income of sixty thousand livres."

"If I had but myself to consider, I should love her more than fortune, more than life, more than all; but unhappily I have a father and a mother who worship me and whom I ruin by refusing."

"Yes, you are right," said Cretté; "there lies your real obligation. This, my dear friend, as you well understand, is a question of conscience that you alone can solve."

Roger gave a deep sigh.

For his part, the Marquis de Cretté became silent and relapsed into a long reverie; then, of a sudden, he seized Roger's hand with a movement so brusque as to startle the latter.

"You are a thrice-lost man!" he declared. "I divine the source of these propositions."



"Ah!" exclaimed Roger in affright.

"The gentleman with the warts is some judge, some associate, some tip-staff, with a hunch-backed daughter, and he feels the need of establishing her advantageously."

"Marquis, I entreat you not to say such things; you make my flesh creep."

"My dear, one must speak the truth to one's friends!"

"Alas!" groaned Roger.

"However," pursued the marquis, "speak of it to your father, and ask his opinion, but, in my mind, there is no doubt on the subject."

"There might be still another case!" responded the victim, dwelling on each word with a lamentable accent. "It might be that one of these gentlemen whom you have just mentioned has a daughter who —"

"I thought of that," replied Cretté, "but I did not like to say it. Of the two defects, which would you prefer? As for me, I confess that I should choose the incurable deformity."

"It is a horrible trap," cried Roger, in a rage.

"You must decide, however," said the marquis; "there is no middle course. It is a matter of losing your suit, or of leaping into a gulf blindfold."

"Alas! Alas!" reiterated Roger.

"My poor friend," said Cretté, whom the chevalier's situation touched, even to tears, "you are in a trap; but you need not give up all hope before the second visit. Take advantage of the opportunity, when you get hold of that devil of a man, to turn him inside out; demand information; insist on knowing the necessity. If he refuses you, do you refuse him. I will be concealed at the door, I will follow the demon even to hell, and we shall at least have the satisfaction of getting our revenge, I will answer for that."

"Yes, but I shall lose my suit."

"Ah! pshaw! what of that? You cannot have everything."

As all that the chevalier and the marquis could suggest in no way advanced matters, Roger took his way back to his hotel, and re-entered The Golden Harrow.

Roger then sat down to write to his father; but he reflected that a letter required four days to go to Loches and four to return, which made eight days, supposing even that the baron answered by return post. Now, judgment was to be rendered within three days; it was therefore, literally impossible to receive a seasonable answer from Anguilhem. The poor fellow, however, indeed needed an impulse from his father in order to come to any decision.

He remained then, confronting himself, shedding bitter tears, his hands plucking at his hair, despairing of the future, and calling aloud upon Constance, La Pintade, La Guérite, the woods of Garenne, upon all the memories, in short, of his youth; and then he reproached himself with his unsophisticated foolishness, and admired the profound speeches of the marquis, when the latter, listening to Roger's narration of his pastoral amours at Beuzerie, the apparition of Constance in Roger's room, and the flight of both to La Chapelle Saint-Hippolyte, had cried, —

"How unsophisticated you were, d'Anguilhem! How artless you were, my handsome Roger! — ah, but you were silly, my poor friend!"

And Roger repeated, —

"Ah yes, I was very silly; yes, I was very artless; yes, yes, I was very unsophisticated!"

It can be seen that his sojourn in Paris began to operate efficaciously upon Roger.

But necessity was there, stretching out her ruthless hand, armed with its gads of iron. Every minute was worth a day, every day had the importance of a year. On the morrow would return the man with the warts, as inexorable as time, as punctual as death.

Roger spent the night in seeking a way to extricate himself from his position; needless to say, he found none.

The day came. Armed with a mass of new propositions, an arsenal of insidious questions, Roger awaited the man with the warts.

The man did not keep him waiting long. At the very hour, the very minute, the very second designated, Roger, who sat with listening ear, heard the sound of his step on the stairs; then at last, at the words, "Come in!" pronounced by Roger with trembling voice, the door opened, and the fatal emissary entered, humbler, blander, more obsequious than he had been on the day before.

With a sweeping glance around, his eyes took in the whole room.

"You are quite alone?" he asked.

"Look for yourself," d'Anguilhem answered.

The unknown renewed his inspection with the same minuteness of detail that he had employed on the former occasion; then, his inspection concluded, he approached Roger, who was sitting in his chair, as pale as a condemned man exposed upon a scaffold.

"Well, monsieur le chevalier," said the mysterious man, "have you reflected?"

"I have done more, indeed," answered Roger, "I have made a guess, monsieur; and so, let us speak frankly, and make an end of the matter with the present interview."

"It is my most ardent wish, monsieur," replied the unknown.

"You are sent by some one that wishes to get rid of his daughter."

"To get rid of? Oh! monsieur, that is a harsh expression."

"Let us not cavil at the phrase, — I am, unfortunately, but too certain that it is the correct one."

"Nevertheless, I would undertake to change your opinion."

"Now, this father is one of my judges, is he not?" asked Roger, gazing steadily into the changeable eyes of the man with the warts.

The stranger stared at Roger, in his turn, and with a degree of surprise bordering upon amazement.

"Faith! yes, monsieur, you have guessed it."

"Ah! I knew it, indeed!" exclaimed Roger, triumphantly.

"Well, and what then?"

"It leads me to conclude that I shall lose my suit if I do not espouse her."

"And also to the certainty that you will win if you do espouse her."

"It is very sad," said Roger.

"Ah! monsieur," said the stranger, "you do wrong to complain; you are on the high road to fortune. Go ahead, chevalier, go ahead, — that is all I have to say."

"Yes, and I, a gentleman, against whose honor not a breath can be whispered, I shall have married the daughter of a man that sells justice."

"Oh! you look at the matter from a deplorable standing-point, Monsieur d'Anguilhem," replied the unknown; "your point of view is absurd, if you will permit me to say so! A man that has influence makes use of it; he serves his friends, and the law of gratitude, which in the

law of fine natures, being granted, his friends, in their turn, do him a service in exchange for his kind offices."

"Yes, I know, indeed; but the demoiselle?"

"Well, the demoiselle?"

"The demoiselle — is she a demoiselle?"

The stranger chuckled.

"Or a widow?" continued d'Anguilhem.

The stranger chuckled still more.

"The devil! monsieur," cried the chevalier in a rage, "I believe you are mocking me."

"God forbid, chevalier; but I laugh at your apprehensions."

"Which are groundless, perhaps," returned d'Anguilhem, "when I am required to buy a pig in a poke!"

"Your surprise will be the pleasanter, Monsieur d'Anguilhem."

"Ah! I know how to be satisfied as to that, monsieur. Only let me see the demoiselle — the young person — the person I am to marry — the lady in question, in short."

"Impossible, monsieur, impossible."

"But come, — the father, then, — let me see the father. That is not asking too much, eh?"

"On the contrary, monsieur, it is asking everything. Having seen the father, within twenty-four hours you will know who is the daughter."

"You will drive me mad!" exclaimed d'Anguilhem.

"Come, monsieur le chevalier," remonstrated the man with the warts, speaking in his most honeyed tones, "do not thus excite yourself. The transaction is an honest one, believe me, and you will repent having raised difficulties, for, in giving way to all these petty considerations, which, I see with regret, have a ridiculous importance in your estimation, you are in a fair way to lose a fortune of fifteen hundred thousand livres and a case that entails from

thirty to forty thousand livres of costs; while in marrying you are assured of your million and a half, plus furniture worth sixty thousand crowns, jewels and precious stones worth more than one hundred and fifty thousand livres, to say nothing of the money in the strong box,—and the box is heavy, I can answer for it; I was present when they put on the seals.”

“*Ah, ça !* answer one question.”

“Proceed, monsieur, proceed, and if I am at liberty to answer, I will do so.”

“How does it happen,” said Roger, “that my would-be father-in-law did not offer his daughter to Monsieur Afghano, my adversary?”

“Because he wished to give you the preference.”

“I am greatly obliged to him!”

“Then, the Indian is ugly, and you are a handsome fellow; then, too, your adversary may be a very great lord in his own country, but here his nobility is not recognized; in short, the name of d’Anguilhem sounds better to French ears than the rather barbarous one of Afghano. Madame Afghano! you understand,—how could that be announced at court? However, if you refuse to-day —”

“Well, if I refuse to-day?”

“I shall go to Monsieur Afghano to-morrow.”

“Why, the father is determined, then, to establish his daughter?”

“She is old enough to be settled.”

“Ah! yes, I believe it. In short, I am chosen for the sacrifice.”

“I repeat, monsieur, that you are wrong, and your words are those of a page. You are given fifteen hundred thousand livres; they are laid in your hand; for that purpose you are run to earth in the worst room of a

bad hotel, and you call yourself a sacrifice! Ah! really, you wear me out."

"Well, monsieur, let us come to terms," said d'Anguilhem. "Does the one who sent you wish a hundred, or two hundred, or three hundred thousand livres? I concede them, I offer them, I give them to him!"

"This proposition of yours is not common sense, chevalier. The hundred thousand crowns that you are offering are not yours to give; they form your wife's dower."

"What! my wife's dower?"

"Eh! yes. On marrying the young girl, you settle a hundred thousand crowns on her; that is very natural, it appears to me, when the father has made you the winner of fifteen hundred thousand livres."

"You said 'the young girl,' monsieur!" cried the chevalier; "ah! you said it; the demoiselle is young, then?"

"You lucky, lucky d'Anguilhem! accept, I advise you, accept!"

"Listen: you know me; I live in open daylight. There is no mystery about me, and I play with my cards on the table."

"Well, may you play a fine game to the end!"

"I ask nothing better; but I need some evidence of your credit, a proof of your influence."

"What?"

"Delay for eight days the judgment to be pronounced on the day after to-morrow, and in exchange for this assurance I will pledge you my word on two conditions."

"Which are —?"

"That the girl shall not be deformed, and shall not, or, rather, she shall —"

"I understand, chevalier."

"Well?"

"Agreed."

"To what? — you will guarantee —"

"Yes."

"In that case, you have my word."

"In ten days, then?"

"In ten days."

"I shall be here on the morning on which the decision is rendered."

"I shall expect you."

"Very well, chevalier, very well. Ah! you were born under a lucky star, Monsieur d'Anguilhem!"

And the man with the warts took his hat and backed out of the room, bowing more humbly than ever.

Five minutes later he returned in alarm.

"Monsieur," he cried, "perhaps you thought to save yourself by a bold stroke, and for that purpose stationed your friend, the Marquis de Cretté, in ambush in his carriage twenty steps from the door of the hotel; do not deny it. I recognized the livery and the coat of arms; but you are making a mistake, be assured of that. The delay accorded is a guaranty to us as well as to you. If, in the interval, anything of our projects should be noised abroad, if anything transpires of any nature whatever, if any sort of proceeding on your part gives us umbrage, I, the sole witness, — pray understand, the sole one, — will deny everything, and you will lose your suit in disgrace."

Roger was astounded at this new threat, which corresponded so well with his secret intentions; for, as we have said, he had conspired with the marquis to unravel the mystery and to visit upon his tormentors the annoyance which they had inflicted upon him.

However, on finding his plans discovered, he fell back, disheartened.



"What must be done, monsieur, that you may be satisfied?" he demanded of the unknown.

"Descend first, monsieur," replied the latter, "and when I have seen you depart with the marquis, I, too, will go away."

Roger put on his hat and obeyed with a crestfallen air, followed, a flight of stairs behind, by the mysterious man.

He found Cretté impatiently waiting in his carriage. He warned him that he was discovered, and they were together driven to the Luxembourg, where they conversed a long time.

Meanwhile, the man with the warts went his own mysterious way.

"There is nothing to do now," the marquis told the chevalier, "unless, very quietly, to set on foot some inquiries, in order to engage your mind somewhat, and by preparation to deaden the blow which cannot be avoided. After all, my dear chevalier, assume that the thing is done, and that you have made a bad match. On the other hand, you can easily console yourself on looking around and seeing by how many other queer households you are surrounded."

"Yes, but the wives have entered those households in the usual manner, while I — I am being hunted down in fine shape! Good Lord! what will all our friends say?"

"They will know nothing about it; you do not intend to speak of it, do you?"

"God forbid!"

"Well, it is not likely that your father-in-law will for his part boast of his novel invention for lighting Hymen's torch."

"Alas! have you not yourself more than once told me that everything is known in Paris?"

"Everything is known, or nearly so; but a thing can be concealed if one is bent upon it. Besides, a pistol is at your head, and you must escape either by the door or by the window, as they say. Recall your studies among the Jesuits of Amboise, and since you have taken a course in philosophy, why, my dear fellow, be a philosopher."

"Ah, marquis! that is a very easy thing for you to say. Come, be frank — would you make this marriage? Answer!"

"I, the Marquis de Cretté, possessing an income of sixty thousand livres, as I do, without counting my mother's property, — no, I confess, I would not marry this girl without seeing her; but if I were Roger Tancrède d'Anguilhem, and I must, in case of refusal, die of hunger, I would marry Alecto herself, possibly separating from her afterwards, or, the opportunity offering, breaking a bed-post over her back."

"You are speaking sincerely?"

"On the word of a gentleman!"

"But, reflect, — I am in love."

"That is always folly; but, in your case, it is a misfortune."

"But think of it! I shall lose Constance!"

"Nonsense! Only mountains never meet, and some day you and Mademoiselle Constance will meet."

"She will lose faith in my loyalty."

"You will explain matters."

"She will curse me."

"Ah! in that case, the wrong will all be hers, and she will be unreasonable."

"She will not believe it possible that I could have resolved to be so unfaithful."

"You will say that your father was responsible,

and she will think it was Anguilhem's revenge on Beuzerie."

"But she too will marry."

"So much the better for you, my dear fellow! so much the better! In the first place, you will not have it on your conscience that you have caused her to remain single. Then, once she is married as well as you, others will forget your little romance. You will go into the country, you will hunt with her husband, you will invite him to dinner; while he is paying compliments to your wife, you will be talking over old times with his. However he speeds, you will always have the advantage of taking up the affair just where you left off."

"Ah! if Madame de Maintenon were to hear you, my dear Cretté."

"She would think herself forty years younger, that is all."

The two friends arose to go and pursue their inquiries.

## XV.

### HOW THE JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN.

THE chevalier and the marquis spent the next three days in running about. Valets talked, concierges talked, the very clerks of the court themselves opened their mouths, so adroit were the ruses and ingenious the methods employed by the two friends in order to learn what they wished to know.

However, after all their inquiries, they found that twelve judges and sixty councillors had marriageable daughters, so that after all their research, Roger and the marquis were but little further along than when they started.

There were, moreover, certain of these damsels whom the chevalier held in dread, as they could by no means be regarded as prizes. One had been surprised at night in a half-ruined cloister back of the Rue Saint Benoît.

Another had made a journey into Picardy, without either her father or her mother, and there were very ugly rumors that her cousin, the musketeer, had brought her back.

A third, indeed, had been recognized, it was said, in a fiacre, at Marly, at one o'clock in the morning, leaving the notorious inn with the sign of The Golden Calf.

Nothing went to prove that the demoiselle he was to marry was one of these three; but there was nothing to prove that she was not one of them. As a result, Roger remained plunged in the deepest perplexity.

In the meantime, he learned that, in accordance with the desire that he had expressed to the mysterious man, the judgment was to be postponed eight days. It was to him a significant mark of his persecutors' good will toward him, as well as of their influence in connection with the courts of justice.

On the eighth day after he had written, that is, two days before a decision would be rendered, he received a letter from Anguilhem.

The baron had been sparing of neither ink nor paper, for the letter contained eight large pages. He announced to the chevalier that he would himself have come to Paris, had not lack of money detained him at his château. He deplored the fatal necessity that weighed upon his dear son, and he left him absolutely free to act according to the dictates of his understanding or of his heart; which seemed to Roger to be a touch of the most exquisite paternal delicacy, and which, amid a thousand sobs, caused him to adopt the cruel resolution of renouncing Constance to secure the happiness of his parents.

"Do not be influenced by consideration for us," wrote the baron in this model letter. "You are young, Roger, and you have long years to live; do not sadden your entire existence for the sake of easing the remainder of ours. This suit will have ruined us, your mother and me, — but, what matter! we are used to privations. Besides, you have strength, good will, powerful friends; you will obtain employment which will admit of your assisting us a little until our deaths, which now cannot be very far distant."

Roger went no further. He wiped his eyes, bowed his head with reverence, and when in due season the man with the warts arrived at his apartment, the chevalier said, —

"Monsieur, I am ready; what have you for me to sign?"

"This," said the emissary, drawing from his pocket, and displaying, a paper covered with writing.

"Very well," said Roger.

And he signed without reading.

"*Pardieu!* monsieur," said the man with the warts, "you are a straightforward gentleman, and however slow you are to decide, you at least act magnificently when you have made up your mind. That generous oversight will cost you nothing; read, however."

With terrible anguish, Roger read, trembling at every line lest he should encounter the name of one of the three redoubtable damsels; but he had the good fortune to see another name.

This paper was a document imposing the obligation to marry Mademoiselle Christine Sylvandire Bouteau, sole daughter of Maître Jean Amédée Bouteau, *conseiller-rapporteur* of the King's High Parliament, and containing an acknowledgment to the said Christine Sylvandire Bouteau, of a *dot* of one hundred thousand crowns, paid on the day on which the very noble and very honorable Roger Tancrède d'Anguilhem won his suit-at-law against the Sieur Afghano, the stepson of the late Vicomte de Bouzenois.

Maître Jean Amédée Bouteau was that austere councillor who would receive neither Roger nor Afghano; the one that had no cat to which one could offer jewels, nor an ape on which one could bestow surreptitious donations, nor a parrot on which one could settle a life annuity. But he had a marriageable daughter.

"Is she very ugly, monsieur?" demanded Roger.

"I have orders to reply to none of your questions, Monsieur le Chevalier. Make your toilet, follow me to

the Palais, be present at the judgment to be rendered in two hours, and I shall have the honor to conduct you thereafter to the hôtel of Monsieur Bouteau, your father-in-law."

"For what purpose?" cried Roger, with an impulse of terror which interfered with his comprehending the incongruity of the question.

"Why, to return thanks, in the first place, for the possession from that moment of something like a million and a half more than you now have, and next to salute your affianced."

The chevalier's legs failed him.

"My father will be saved, and my mother will die in peace at Anguilhem," he murmured, falling into an arm-chair.

"Come, come," said the man with the warts, "I see indeed that you need to be alone in order to compose yourself; you shall go your own way to the Palais, and I will go mine."

And the man with the warts took his departure cavalierly enough, this time. Roger noticed the difference in his manner.

"It is to be expected," said he. "He is now sure of the matter. I have signed my own sentence."

And, as Maître Bouteau's envoy had suggested, he began his toilet.

Roger felt death in his heart. He detested in advance the woman he was going to see, and yet, by a prompting of the vanity inherent in the heart of man, he did not wish his first interview to give her a bad impression of his face and figure.

He donned a black velvet coat frogged with gold, and a white satin waistcoat whose seams were covered with rich embroidery. He then sent a messenger for the Mar-

quis de Cretté, who soon arrived in his most magnificent equipage.

Behind this carriage followed the coaches of d'Herbigny, Chastellux, and Clos-Renaud. Mademoiselle Poussette brought up the rear in a remise.

The marquis ascended to Roger's apartment alone.

As soon as he saw the marquis, the chevalier extended his arms, crying,—

"Alas! alas! alas!"

"The sacrifice, then, is made?"

"Made and executed," was Roger's response. "I have signed. Poor Constance!"

"And have you any new intelligence of your affianced?" hesitatingly inquired the marquis.

"Her name is Sylvandre."

"Ah! the devil! a charming name; that is already something. But that is only her baptismal name; what is her family name?"

"Bouteau."

"The daughter of our councillor!" cried the marquis.

"The same," said Roger. "Alas! it is some little monster that he has concealed from all eyes, and of whom he unburdens himself in my favor."

"Or in favor, rather, of your barony. I have occasionally met Maître Bouteau."

"And what sort of man is my father-in-law?"

"A Jew grafted on an Arab; enormously rich, besides, according to all accounts."

"And, in spite of his wealth," cried Roger, "he is driven to employing such means to establish his daughter! Ah! my friend, my friend, nothing but filial devotion—"

"True; Cleobis and Biton were not to be compared with us, chevalier, in my opinion; but we must not stay here lamenting, let us go to the Palais. If your wife is



too — queer, why, you can put her in one corner of the house with servants of her own, and a hundred thousand francs for her maintenance. You will suffer the affliction of her bearing your name, that is all; and with the other fourteen hundred thousand livres that remain,— well, you will find enjoyment elsewhere. You have read the contract carefully? There was nothing of your being forced — ”

“ No.”

“ Well, my dear fellow, you are to be pitied then ! Come, come, we must be off.”

And Cretté preceded d'Anguilhem, who went to the doors of their carriages to salute d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, Chastellux, and Mademoiselle Poussette, one after the other, and who then entered the coach of the marquis.

They reached the Palais; a crowd was assembled. The begum's son had decided to be present at the dénouement of this long drama. It was supposed that he must have dispensed nearly fifty thousand livres in making himself agreeable to the judges. He was so beaming of aspect that Roger lacked little of fainting, and Cretté became quite pale.

The judges were in the next room; they were in consultation.

At the end of an hour's deliberation the chamber was in session. Roger recognized his three judges, and trembled; behind them modestly came the *conseiller-rapporteur*.

“ What is the name of the *conseiller-rapporteur* ? ” Roger timidly asked his neighbor.

“ Maître Bouteau,” answered the latter; “ a very worthy man.”

Roger endeavored to read the face of Maître Bouteau; but it was impossible.

The judges took their places with the grave aspect characteristic of those gentlemen, permitted the judicial regard, fixing upon nothing, to wander around the hall, and Maître Bouteau unfolded a paper.

"Courage!" said Cretté, leaning toward the chevalier's ear; "it is our father-in-law."

"I am aware of it," returned Roger.

Maître Bouteau coughed, spat, and read as follows:—

"*Whereas*, The Sieur Afghano, a native of India, has been unable to produce the document that he should have tendered the tribunal, and there exists no authentic proof of his right to the succession; and

"*Whereas*, The Sieur Baron Tancrède Palamède d'Anguilhem, represented by his son, Roger Tancrède d'Anguilhem, is the next of kin to the deceased, and has presented documents in due form establishing that relationship, therefore

"*Be it ordered* by the court that the Sieur Baron Tancrède Palamède d'Anguilhem shall immediately enter into possession of the estate of the late Vicomte de Bouzenois, consisting of all properties real and personal and general possessed by the deceased, as is just, and that

"The Sieur Afghano, a native of India, is condemned to pay all charges without reserve or costs."

Maître Bouteau delivered the whole without once glancing at Roger, who could scarcely steady himself on his bench.

The marquis put his arm around his friend and whispered,—

"D'Anguilhem, your father-in-law is a grand man."

"Yes; but patience," said Roger. "The Indian is going to produce his document."

"He would not have waited until this time," returned Cretté. "Be easy; as he has not produced it, it is because he has none."

In fact, the Indian produced no document. He lowered his head an instant as if overcome by the blow; then, raising it immediately with a pompous air, in a voice loud enough to be heard not only by the judges but by the audience as well, he said,—

“Well, it was a good thing that my mother did not give everything to that wretched Bouzenois. Here is a proof of how dangerous it is to enrich lovers.”

Roger felt his anger rising, and moved as if about incontinently to avenge the memory of a relative of whom he had just been recognized the heir.

“Are you mad?” cried Cretté, detaining him. “Let the wretch whine, then, that has just been flayed. Your name is not Bouzenois, but d’Anguilhem; and, *pardieu!* the lawyers have just said something very different.”

At this moment, the Indian came toward the group of young people. Roger thought he was coming to him, and was ready to receive him; but the Indian passed near them, that was all. Only, in passing, he said loud enough to be heard, —

“You made a mistake, Mademoiselle Poussette, when you betrayed me. I still have an income of one hundred thousand livres.”

“I congratulate you, monsieur,” said Roger; “it is more than enough to support your name worthily.”

“There, there, do not get into a quarrel,” said Cretté; “let us go home and have a jolly supper.”

“Alas! Cretté,” replied d’Anguilhem, “you forget that I have to go and see my fiancée.”

However, Roger pronounced these words in a tone less contrite than one might have expected from him. He was thinking of his father’s pride, his mother’s joy, on suddenly finding themselves so prodigiously rich. And

the poor chevalier was so good a son that he began to shake off the thoughts of Constance's grief.

And then one is quickly habituated to prosperity. Roger left the court-room with a springing gait and an inflation of chest that would have done credit to one who had been a millionaire from birth.

Cretté lent him his coach to go and pay his visit to Maître Bouteau, and he took leave of his friend, reminding him that the supper would be ready at eight o'clock.

Roger now discovered the man with the warts who was standing behind him. His opaline eyes glowed with fire.

"Maître Bouteau has just left the Palais to return to his home. Will not Monsieur le Baron go at once and present his compliments?"

"Certainly, my dear monsieur," responded the chevalier, "it is my most earnest desire."

"Well, are you satisfied, chevalier?"

"Yes, monsieur, you have kept your word, it is true; but there are yet two conditions to be fulfilled."

"And they shall be fulfilled, monsieur, as exactly — let us hope so, at least — as the first has been."

"Be so kind, then, as to get into my carriage, monsieur, and we will be off."

The man with the warts got into the coach; but notwithstanding Roger's insistence, he would sit only in front.

They reached a hôtel in the Rue Planche-Mibray; they ascended to the third floor.

Maître Bouteau was sitting in his office. He was a rather small man, with an immense brow, small eyes hidden behind spectacles, thick eyebrows sprinkled with gray, and an imperceptible mouth which was lost in the wrinkles of his cheeks; in a word, he was a very ugly

father-in-law, but it was not he that the chevalier was on the point of marrying. Roger bowed almost graciously, and was opening his mouth to express his gratitude.

"No thanks, monsieur," said Maître Bouteau, "you had an excellent case; besides, I have but followed the dictates of my conscience, and my colleagues, however prejudiced against you they may have been, allowed themselves to be persuaded by my feeble arguments in favor of justice."

A second time Roger bowed to Maître Bouteau; the latter did not appear to be examining him, but, while returning his salute, he eyed him narrowly over his spectacles. This scrutiny ended, he turned toward an embroidered screen which stretched behind him, and said with perfect naturalness, —

"My daughter, come hither and pay your respects to my client, Monsieur le Chevalier Roger Tancrede d'Anguilhem."

Roger thought the earth was slipping from under his feet. A cold perspiration oozed from his forehead, his heart suspended its beating, and his eyes, staring and haggard, fixed their gaze upon an angle of the screen.

Suddenly, Roger beheld a delicious creature appearing.

Tall, of graceful figure, lithe, and agreeably proportioned, with black eyes veiled by velvety lashes, and long black hair that hung in heavy curls upon her white shoulders, — Sylvandire was eighteen years of age, at most, and would have passed as a miracle of beauty.

Roger, breathless, stupefied, petrified, did not think even to make a bow. He remained motionless, in ecstasy, his lips parted like the statue of Apollo about to speak.

"My child," continued the councillor as he took Sylvandire by the hand, "this is Monsieur le Chevalier

Roger Tancrede d'Anguilhem who does us the honor of asking your hand in marriage."

Sylvandire raised her great black eyes to Roger, and cast upon him a look that penetrated the very depths of his heart.

"Oh, I am lost!" cried Roger to himself; "such a beautiful girl must already have been loved by some one, unless she has been kept in a closet."

"Will you permit Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem to prefer his suit?" continued the councillor.

Sylvandire glanced a second time at Roger with a mingling of astonishment, fear, and languorous passion; but she was silent.

"Silence gives consent, monsieur le chevalier," resumed Maître Bouteau. "Now, you shall know that Sylvandire is my only daughter, and that she brings her husband a dower of three hundred thousand livres."

Sylvandire pressed her father's hand as a sign of gratitude.

"*Pardieu!*" said Roger to himself, "he could give her six hundred thousand for all the money it costs him. No matter! I ought to thank him for being so modest."

"As to the wedding, when do you say, monsieur le chevalier?" asked Maître Bouteau.

"Why," said Roger, "it is for mademoiselle to fix the date, and when she will consent—"

Sylvandire bent her head, still without speaking.

"She is a mute!" cried Roger, believing that he had discovered the probable infirmity, and incapable of mastering the new fear by which he was just seized.

Sylvandire burst out laughing very frankly, and replied, —

"No, monsieur le chevalier; thank God, I can speak."

"Perhaps she is only foolish," thought the chevalier,

"and yet with such eyes it is impossible not to possess intellect."

However, as this first interview could only be embarrassing to all, the councillor gave his daughter a side-glance, and she courtesied as if about to retire.

"What!" exclaimed Roger, "are you going away, mademoiselle, without deigning to say at what date you —"

"I leave you to my father, monsieur," answered Sylvandire. "Although he is a man of law, he does not like affairs to drag along. What he does is well done."

"Come," said Roger to himself, "I was deceived in that respect. She is not very stupid."

The fortunate chevalier went from one surprise to another.

Sylvandire withdrew, leaving Roger alone with his future father-in-law.

The marriage was set to take place in fifteen days.

The arrangements settled, Roger took leave of Maître Bouteau, and descended the stairs with a step lighter than that with which he had entered.

At the street-door he found the man with the warts.

"Well, monsieur," said the latter, "are you satisfied?"

"So well satisfied," replied Roger, "that if the last condition is as faithfully kept as the first two, you shall have a thousand louis, my fine fellow."

"That is just the same as if I had them in hand," said the unknown, bowing almost to the ground.

Roger heard this exclamation, and sprang into the coach without touching the steps.

"To the marquis!" he shouted to Basque with a voice in which lingered no trace of his recent fears.

Ten minutes later, the coach drew up in the courtyard of the hôtel.

## XVI.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM PHILOSOPHICALLY  
RESIGNS HIMSELF TO A PRETTY WIFE, A MAGNIFI-  
CENT HÔTEL, AND AN INCOME OF SEVENTY-FIVE  
THOUSAND LIVRES.

THERE was a numerous company at the house of the marquis.

Roger entered with a beaming countenance. All approached and overwhelmed him with congratulations.

The marquis allowed this storm of felicitations to subside, and then he took Roger by the hand and drew him into a boudoir.

"Well," he said, "the fiancée?"

"Charming," responded Roger, with a rueful look.

"As pretty as Constance?"

"Alas! prettier."

"Why, then, what the devil are you still so gloomy about?"

"Ah! my friend," murmured Roger with a deep sigh, "I am perfectly sure that Constance —"

"Well, yes, I comprehend," said the marquis; "but what can you expect, my dear fellow! that also would be too much good luck, and you are getting unreasonably exacting. Consider yourself very fortunate to be let off with that, and then, besides, who knows? Everything that happens to you is so extraordinary!"

"Oh! no, my friend, you will not persuade me that there is not some serpent hidden among all these roses. But what of it, marquis! The die is cast, and be-



sides I have reflected that the most honorable man on earth might be deceived in my position. My wife's past is beyond me. Well, I shall content myself with watching her future."

"That is right; that is the way I like to see you! Now, let us go back. A bold face, and trust me to manage at the table, happy millionaire!"

They sat down to supper. The gold, the crystal, the candles, all were resplendent. At the sight Roger reflected that he, poor gentleman, two hours before, without fortune, could the next day, if he wished, receive in a handsomer hôtel and with a magnificence equal to that displayed in his honor, this friend which a timely thrust had made for him. Then, while thinking all this, he remembered the fencing-master, so kind and so disinterested at the time, who had, without knowing it, assured the fortune of his family by demonstrating a *flanconade* to his son.

"My dear friends," said the marquis, "you are aware that we have gathered this evening to rejoice over the winning of the famous suit which gives our friend an income of seventy-five thousand livres."

"You are the one that brought me luck," returned Roger with a bow to the marquis.

"Here's to the health of d'Anguilhem and his seventy-five thousand livres!" then cried the guests together.

"But wait," said Cretté, "and you shall drink two healths at once, unless you prefer to drink twice."

"What is it then?" at once demanded d'Herbigny and Clos-Renaud.

"Our friend d'Anguilhem," said the marquis, "has suddenly fallen in love in Paris, and who can guess what dainty bit the rascal has chanced upon?"

"A maid of Saint Cyr, dowered by Madame de Maintenon?" ventured Chastellux.

"A princess palatine?" asked Clos-Renaud.

"A daughter of the royal blood?" demanded d'Herbigny.

"Ah! well, indeed! D'Anguilhem is noble enough already, and he is looking for money. The daughter of a lawyer, messieurs."

"Phew!" whistled some of the guests.

"Ah! chevalier, you are retrograding," said d'Herbigny. "You should marry an actress of the Comédie-Française or an opera-singer; that would be more like the grand seigneur."

"But stay, messieurs," resumed the marquis. "The damsel is as beautiful as Venus, and has a dower of six hundred thousand livres."

"*Peste!* chevalier, we congratulate you," cried the young men in chorus.

"Which means the chevalier settles in Paris, and establishes himself in the hôtel of the Vicomte de Bouzenois, and gives us banquets, — banquets beside which this one is only a grub-shop dinner."

"In that case, long live the chevalier and the chevalière!" cried d'Herbigny, raising his glass.

And all, in the same terms, did justice to d'Herbigny's toast.

"Now, said the viscount, replacing his glass on the table, "as you are on a good footing with the lawyers' guild, my dear d'Anguilhem, find for me, too, a daughter of one of your father-in-law's colleagues, some pretty little *robine*. I will take her even with five hundred thousand livres."

"Then, here's to the future marriage of the Vicomte d'Herbigny," said the chevalier, lifting his glass.

Then while all were drinking he quickly turned to Cretté, and extending his hand, said, —

"Thanks, marquis, thanks! You have been kind, excellent, as always."

In fact, Cretté had saved his friend from all ridicule on the subject of his marriage. It is also true that Mademoiselle Bouteau's six hundred thousand livres had produced a magical effect.

In brief, the supper was so gay that, whatever his preoccupation, d'Anguilhem made merry even to the dessert.

Roger left the marquis two hours after midnight, making an appointment for the morning at eleven o'clock. He wished to take possession of the Hôtel de Bouzenois accompanied only by his friend.

At the appointed hour the marquis was at Roger's hotel. They set out together for the Place Louis-le-Grand, and this time the two doors of the grand entrance opened to the chevalier. For an hour the representatives of the court had been waiting to remove the seals.

All that the man with the warts had said was scrupulously true. The strong box was full; the caskets were gorged with jewels; the collection of engraved gems and of medals was magnificent.

Roger was dazzled at sight of such wealth. He who had come to Paris with fifty louis, did not know that so much money existed in the world. He wished to repay on the spot the eight or ten thousand livres that he owed Cretté; but the marquis made him understand that he was in rather too great haste by saying that he would send Basque in the morning to take charge of all that hardware.

The chevalier at once selected some of the diamonds and precious stones to send to his mother. Perhaps

while doing this, he was thinking of Constance; for, although he did not pronounce her name, Cretté understood by his involuntary sighs that he had not forgotten her.

The hôtel, although very sumptuous, needed to be overlooked by a man of taste. Again it was Cretté who undertook the task. He sent for his upholsterer, gave him his orders, and granted him eight days. The upholsterer declared that it was impossible to have everything done in so short a time. Cretté contented himself with replying, —

“You will be paid the day it is finished.”

By the seventh day the hôtel was refitted and in order; and, in accordance with Roger's ambition, the arms of d'Anguilhem had replaced on the hatchment the arms of Bouzenois.

In the meantime Roger had sent his mother the best carriage he could find in the coach-houses. It was Rameau-d'or who conveyed it, travelling post. He had to return by the mail-coach. Cretté was Roger's never-failing resource. When he was not lending his advice, he was lending his money. When he was not lending his money, he was lending his servants.

As Rameau-d'or was a trustworthy man, he was notified that one of the coach-boxes, whose key was given him, contained a thousand louis, and was bidden to keep watch over it.

Roger wrote also to his father and mother to come and take possession of the rest of their fortune, sending them an account, even to the last sou, of all that he had been obliged to expend, adding, moreover, that by unheard-of good fortune his fiancée was beautiful and perfectly bred, and it seemed impossible that any one could be more spirituelle.

The joy of the baron and the baroness was extreme when they learned that their daughter-in-law seemed to be quite above reproach, and the baron declared that he would settle upon his son an income of fifty thousand livres, and keep the remainder to improve Anguilhem.

"Yet," he added, "perhaps we shall buy a town residence at Loches, in order to receive there during the winter."

The report of the winning of the suit and the marriage to follow was spread abroad as far as Beuzerie. The viscount and the viscountess, who, while consenting to their daughter's marriage with Roger, had always preserved a leaven of ill-feeling toward the d'Anguilhems, hastened to transmit the news to their daughter; but Constance shook her head, smiling, and would not believe a word that was told her.

"Has Roger written?" she asked.

"No."

"He told me to believe nothing but what I should hear from his own lips, or should see written by his own hand."

"Consequently —"

"I believe in nothing but his love."

The viscount and the viscountess insisted as long as they were able; but Constance, like the doubting apostle, would not believe without seeing.

Before his departure for Paris the baron felt constrained to pay a visit to his neighbors, and explain to them by what necessity Roger was forced to fail in his engagement. The viscount listened very tranquilly to his discourse from end to end, and then he bade his wife bring Constance down from her room. Constance descended, and Monsieur de Beuzerie begged that the baron would repeat to his daughter what he had just said

to him relating to Roger's marriage. The baron repeated word for word the little speech that he had framed as he came along the road; but during all the time he was speaking Constance kept shaking her head, with a smile that was full of adorable trust. Then when he had ended she asked, —

“Did Roger send you a letter for me?”

“No,” answered the baron. “His position was too embarrassing. He would not have dared avow to you that he had been compelled, in spite of himself, to be unfaithful to you.”

“In that case, you are trying to deceive me,” replied Constance. “Roger told me to believe only what I heard from his own lips, or saw written by his own hand.”

“Consequently,” repeated Monsieur de Beuzerie.

“I believe in nothing but his love.”

And they could get nothing further from the girl, who, moreover, appeared to take no sort of interest in the rumors which soon spread throughout the province.

The departure of the baron and the baroness, travelling post with four horses and a courier in advance, was an event to be talked of a week for ten leagues around. It was said that Roger had found chests filled with diamonds and a gold-mine in the cellar.

During this period Roger was wooing; but his fiancée was kept under the strictest guard. Maître Bouteau did not leave his daughter a moment, — a paternal assiduity that continued to nourish Roger's misgivings. Nevertheless, he went daily to pass an hour with Sylvandire, and the girl, to the great amazement of her future spouse, displayed a most varied culture and a most agreeable mind. Roger never ceased to look and to listen.

All the customary formalities, moreover, had been

observed, and only the arrival of the great relatives was awaited to proceed with the marriage ceremony.

That arrival was too stately a spectacle for us to neglect attempting to give some idea of it to the reader. Monsieur and Madame d'Anguilhem had spiritedly ordered their wardrobes from Paris. Hence they appeared dressed in the latest styles of the court, and as both were of ancient lineage and possessed the noble bearing that two revolutions have not yet been able to efface from our real nobility, they presented a suitably imposing appearance; but the nephews and cousins from the country, and the distant relatives from Saintonge and Périgord, produced a profound sensation. They came in the felt hats, doublets, breeches, and cloaks of the time of Louis XIII. One would have said that a collection of family portraits had emerged from the garret.

Roger, who dreaded ridicule above all things, was married at night at Saint Roche, thus postponing the wedding-feast until all the relatives, loaded with gifts, would have departed in the conveyances by which they had come. The baron and the baroness lavished caresses on the lawyer's daughter, who smiled affectionately at her husband and lent herself admirably to their endearments.

Roger thanked the Marquis de Cretté for all the services rendered him and the honor done him, and promised to write to him on the subject which had so tormented and which still tormented him more than ever. Then he set out with his wife for a little country-seat at Champigny, which had long been used as a place of residence by Monsieur de Bouzenois.

As for the baron and the baroness, they went back to Anguilhem, impatient to heighten by a little necessary

outlay the splendor of the escutcheon that was falling into reproachful decay above the gateway of the château.

The day following Roger's departure for Champigny the Marquis de Cretté received from the chevalier by special courier, a letter which contained only these few lines:—

“I am the most fortunate of men!

“Do me the favor, my dear marquis, to ask my father-in-law for the address of the man with the warts, and remit to him, in my name, one thousand louis.

“Your sincere friend,

“LE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM.”



## XVII.

HOW THE CHEVALIER FOUND HIMSELF IN SUCH LUCK  
THAT HE WAS READY, LIKE POLYCRATES, THE  
TYRANT OF SAMOS, TO CAST A RING INTO THE SEA.

THUS Roger had set his conscience at rest with regard to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie.

If nothing weakens love like possession, nothing nourishes it like hope; but hope once lost, the strongest love retires, if it is not destroyed, before stern necessity. Hence when Roger knew that he must no longer indulge in his old-time fancies, and found himself face to face with one of the most seductive realities that could exist in all the world, he wept and he moaned, but in the end he sacrificed himself, and with a very good grace even.

He took advantage, then, of his mother's return to Anguilhem to write Constance a most touching letter. He told her that one of the necessities that gentlemen sometimes encounter, and by which their courage is tried, had come upon him, and that, in sacrificing himself to the happiness of his family, he was about to renounce the hope of ever being happy himself. He then entreated Constance to forgive and to forget him. But he closed by swearing to his dear love that, in spite of the inexorable decree that he was forced to obey, — the style is that of Corneille, still much in vogue at that date, — he, Roger, should love Constance until death.

Constance, thus released from her promise, became free again, and could marry in turn.

When Roger was writing Constance the letter whose substance we have just given, he had not yet had occasion to write to the Marquis de Cretté the one whose contents we gave at the close of the preceding chapter. He was then yet distrustful of Sylvandire, and he thought that, deceived beforehand, in all probability by his wife, he would always have the best side of the conjugal scene if ever the two rivals should compare notes, and one of them should show the other the letter that she had received.

Roger had been deeply moved while inditing the mournful sentiments that we have set forth, and, with eyes still wet with tears, he took the letter containing them to the Baronne d'Anguilhem. She, good dame, still possessed of faith in the undying nature of love, even when crossed by insurmountable obstacles, hastened to refer the matter to her husband, the more especially because Roger had charged her to forward the letter to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, and to see above all things that it was placed in her own hands.

Monsieur d'Anguilhem was extremely embarrassed by this overture. To fail in the fulfilment of his son's desire was, in his own estimation, to betray a trust, and it must be confessed that during the last four months Roger had so grown in the paternal opinion and esteem, owing to the way in which he had borne himself in the capital, that the baron respected his son almost as much as he loved him. On the other hand, to convey to Constance a letter filled, undoubtedly, with vows of undying love was, perhaps, to rekindle the embers that were very certain to die out if left alone. It was, perhaps, to foster culpable thoughts, to foment a revolution at the hearthstone of the Beuzeries.

For the baron had not sought to learn the contents of

the letter, and he would as soon have cast himself into the fire as to have done it, such was his delicacy in the matter. The baroness, for her part, could give him no information save that, knowing Roger's unalterable affection for Constance, the letter must contain dreadful lamentations against fate and cruel accusations against destiny. As a result, after the baron had considered and reconsidered the subject of Roger's letter in all its bearings, he prudently decided that it would be better not to remit the letter to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie; and in order that he might not reverse his decision, he double-locked the epistle in a cabinet.

The carrying out of this resolution was for some time a source of much torment to the Baron d'Anguilhem; but he gradually gained comfort from the thought that chance often makes use of accident to do a great deal of good in this world.

As a result, Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, not having received the letter which released her from her vows, would admit nothing of what was said to her about Roger's marriage, replying to the most positive assertions of her father and her mother, —

“They have made him believe that I am dead!”

During all this time, Roger, supposing that he had restored her freedom to Constance, was very much at peace, and, were we not afraid of giving our readers too bad an opinion of our hero, we would even add that he was very happy.

I do not think there could be a marriage, unless it united a tiger and a panther, that could not pretend to the enjoyment of peace for a fortnight after the wedding-day.

Moreover, aside from her beauty, which was perfect, and of which Roger was unusually appreciative, Syl-

vandire seemed an adorable combination of simplicity, grace, and virtue.

Her newly-made spouse had questioned and cross-questioned her. He had exhausted his wisdom and logic in an effort to involve her answers in contradiction, but on no subject had he been able to surprise her in an untruth; and so he unceasingly asked himself why Maître Bouteau had taken so many precautions, such care and pains to secure the settlement of a treasure so desirable.

"But what did you do at your father's, dear?" Roger once asked.

"Oh! it was very dull," responded Sylvandire.

"But did he never entertain?"

"Oh! certainly, old counsellors, old lawyers, old judges, — all men whose talk was very tiresome."

"They were all?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu*, yes, absolutely all."

Thereupon Roger, after having dreaded a deformity, an infirmity, and something worse, upon recovering from these three terrors concluded that his wife must be addicted to a secret vice.

"Perhaps she is a gourmand," he said to himself.

It was a vice of the day. See Saint Simon.

And he essayed to provoke her appetite by the help of the exquisite wines that Monsieur de Bouzenois had kept in his cellar for twenty years; but, after tasting the best Tokay and the most exquisite Constance, Sylvandire made a little grimace of disgust, and returned to her pure cold water, the only drink that she liked.

On one occasion, having taken a sip of Syracuse, a flush overspread her face, and she was uncomfortable from it during the remainder of the evening. She de-

clared that henceforth she would abstain from so much as wetting her lips with any sort of wine.

"My wife is not fond of the table," thought Roger. "Let us look for some other vice, for certainly she must have one."

"Ah! now I have it!" he said, one fine morning. "My wife is a gambler."

And that very evening he placed a rouleau of gold before her and handed her the cards; but Sylvandire understood no game, laughed like mad when she won, and made a face for the loss of a twelve-sous piece.

"My wife is not a gambler," said Roger, "it is true; but perhaps she is miserly."

Roger put his wife into her carriage, crammed her pockets with gold, and took her to the most fashionable milliners and dressmakers in Paris. Sylvandire spent three hundred louis on bonnets, laces, and gowns, and that without bargaining.

"The devil!" exclaimed Roger. "She must be extravagant, then."

However, when he one day intentionally offered her a slight reproach for having paid ten louis more for an English guimpe than it was worth, Sylvandire thanked him for the remonstrance, and begged that he would in the future himself regulate her expenditures.

"So much the worse! So much the worse!" thought Roger. "It must be something very serious."

Then Roger stood guard and watched to see if there might not come prowling about the conjugal mansion one of those creatures of both night and day called cousins, a dangerous species of which one can be rid only by slaying them on the spot.

But not a plume of a lover, as Mademoiselle Scudéry would have said, not a muzzle of a gallant, as Molière

would have said, showed itself in the neighborhood of Champigny.

"Most decidedly, I possess a treasure," Roger said to himself in affright; "and I was born, it must be admitted, under some lucky star as yet undiscovered by the modern astronomers."

It was true, however, or at least it seemed to be true.

To say that Sylvandire felt great love for her husband is a thing we dare not affirm. Perhaps Sylvandire loved nothing, and in the eyes of poor Roger, that absence of love was a virtue; but there is nothing like these apparently indifferent people for waking up, for suddenly taking fire. There is nothing like a sunset behind the clouds for producing hail, rain, and storm.

Maître Bouteau visited his children at Champigny. Roger, who adored his own parents, and wrote to them twice a week, thought Sylvandire very cold toward this kind father who had accomplished so much for her. He meditated for two or three days upon her indifference, and as he was in a mood to discover good reason for everything, he persuaded himself in the end that her love for himself had extinguished all other love. We see that Roger was already far advanced in the study of his rôle as husband. From a pessimist he had become an optimist.

Moreover, Roger paid a thousand and one attentions to Maître Bouteau, and Maître Bouteau reciprocated them. But the one had an object in view; the other had none. Roger determined to attain a certain footing with Maître Bouteau, and when he had reached the desired point, to sound him to the depths. After a hearty country dinner which had lasted until seven o'clock in the evening, Roger thought his opportunity had at last arrived.

"Come, Maître Bouteau," he said, as he drew his father-in-law into an embrasure of the window, "come, speak frankly, now that you no longer fear I shall escape you, and, I will also add, now that I no longer even wish to escape; tell me — for I must admit that, so far, I have not discovered for myself — what the fault was with Sylvandire. Of course you must have had your reasons for disposing of her in so strange a fashion."

"I shall be very glad to speak freely, my dear son-in-law. In the first place, you can see for yourself," said the good man whose tongue had been loosened by the muscatelle, "I made Sylvandire's *dot* by the business, — a hundred thousand crowns."

"I know the figure," remarked Roger.

"A sum that you will get back after I am gone, with interest. Then, again, I made sure that my daughter would not marry one of these provincial lordlings whose possessions consist of cloak and sword, nor one of these tradesmen who credit their debts and debit their credits, in a word, who are ruined unless a wife comes to the rescue."

"You knew, then, the amount of Monsieur de Bouzenois' fortune?"

"To the last franc, sou, and denier, my dear son-in-law. I had myself verified everything, computed everything, made every estimate."

"But there were certainly gentlemen of the court to be preferred to me."

"Without doubt; but they had no lawsuits that delivered them up to me, bound hand and foot. Then, too, fortunes of fifteen hundred thousand livres are rare, even at court. Besides, I had always said that I would dower my daughter from the first important case that came in my way. To take money as your judges have

done is to rob both justice and the suitor; but, on the other hand, to throw into the bargain and give that same suitor who is indebted to you for his fortune, a charming girl, is at once, I think so at least, to perform a duty and to render a service."

"Quite the same thing," thought Roger. "In fact, the idea is very reasonable, and in an extreme case one can believe it. And so," he added aloud, "and so, my very dear father-in-law, you were not the least in the world embarrassed with Sylvandire?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu*, not at all, unless it was that she found it pretty dull with me, and that, as she is of a very decided character —"

"Ah! my wife has a decided character?"

"Her little head is iron, my dear son-in-law. As I was saying, since she is of a very decided character, I trembled from one hour to another lest she should commit some mad act. She is a girl of broad intellect, and requires above all things to be constantly entertained."

"She likes pleasure, then?" demanded Roger.

"I know nothing about it, having never provided her with any. However, from what I am able to gather from her character, I should say that she would not dislike amusements."

"Father-in-law, you certainly believe that I wish to make Sylvandire happy, do you not?"

"You are doing all in your power toward that end."

"Well, let us hear now. If, with that end in view, I were to consult you about her tastes and her character, what advice would you give me?"

"I should say: have confidence in her —"

"Ah! indeed, so much the better," interrupted Roger.



"But wait, wait," continued the father-in-law. "I should say: have confidence in her, but watch her always."

"The devil!" ejaculated Roger, ill-pleased enough with the conclusion.

The next day Maître Bouteau set out for Paris, leaving his son-in-law quite preoccupied with their conversation of the night before.

In fact Roger was so happy that it was evident such happiness could not last. And indeed Roger's very happiness was torture.

A strange thing is the heart of man. We do not speak of a woman's, which we know only by sympathy.

A strange thing, we repeat, is the heart of man, and one knows not what to think of the indefinite assortment of loves it contains. Certainly Roger had loved Constance well. Roger loved her even to the extent that had he learned of her marriage he would have been in despair. Well, Roger also loved Sylvandire with a different love, it is true. He loved Constance as one loves a beautiful lily, admiring its purity, intoxicated with its perfume, cherishing it in a corner of the garden of one's heart, away from all eyes, far from all gaze. He loved Sylvandire as one loves a beautiful diamond, causing it to flash its fires at every light, wearing it in the sight of all, gaining the envy of the ambitious.

The love he had experienced for Constance was the purest glow of the soul. The love he felt for Sylvandire was a somewhat commoner blaze, which, kindled in the depths of the heart, gradually won upon all the senses. Roger could have spent his life in looking at Constance, and he would have been happy in looking at her. In his relations with Sylvandire he would have

died of love, like Narcissus, had he been compelled to limit himself merely to the sight of her.

And now that I have sketched Roger's two loves, it is for the women to say with which of the two they prefer to be loved.

But in very truth Roger cherished them both, the one in his soul, the other in his heart; and perhaps even he was so happy, and feared so much to alter his condition, only because the one completed the other.

## XVIII.

HOW THE CONJUGAL HORIZON OF THE CHEVALIER  
D'ANGUILHEM GRADUALLY CLOUDED OVER.

A FEW more days were passed in perfect happiness. But, constantly tormented by the confidences made to him by his father-in-law with regard to Sylvandire, Roger resolved to make a proposition to his wife that would perhaps put to a test the calmness which seemed an affectation on her part, so profound it was.

And Roger was wrong, we must admit. To enjoy present blessings and trust in heaven for those to come is one of the first precepts of human wisdom. It is also one of the least practised. Question three-fourths of the men who have been unhappy, and they will confess that they searched for their first grief, as Diogenes searched for a man, with a lantern.

To be brief, one fine morning Roger lighted his lantern and went to find Sylvandire.

"My beautiful darling," he said to her, "I have some news to announce that will certainly delight you; for of course, as I am greatly pleased, you will be greatly pleased."

"Why, certainly," responded Sylvandire, lifting to Roger a slow glance which was not exempt from some anxiety.

"This happiness arises from our love, Sylvandire; and you, of course, like me, prefer seclusion in love."

Sylvandire remained silent.

"Now," continued Roger, "as just we two love each other," and Roger somewhat emphasized his words, "to be by ourselves, to be far from society —"

Sylvandire gave ear like a horse at the whistling of the lash.

"We will sell the Hôtel de Bouzenois and have the furniture stored. Then we will live, if you like, at Anguilhem, where Maître Bouteau will delight us by coming to spend his vacation."

"And why should we bury ourselves in the country?" demanded Sylvandire with some spirit.

"Why, to live with my family."

"Your family is not mine," replied Sylvandire; "and save for the month that he would come to stay with us, my father would spend the rest of the year in Paris."

"Yes, my dear, you are undoubtedly right. But, between ourselves it may be said, Sylvandire, I do not think you care the least in the world to live with Maître Bouteau."

"You deceive yourself. I dearly love my father; and besides, I have no intention of exiling myself in that way."

"Do you call residence with me exile? Oh! the word is not pleasant, Sylvandire."

"But, my dear," rejoined in a much milder tone the young wife, who in a first discussion dared not go too far, "are we not rich enough to live in Paris, and to live there magnificently even?"

"Certainly," answered Roger. "Yet I wished to learn if you cared more for Paris than for me. At the first trial, you have settled it, — thanks!"

"Oh! by no means; you are deceived," cried Sylvandire effusively, as soon as Roger had committed the

imprudence of letting her see that his proposition was only a jest. "By no means; I will live wherever you wish, my darling, and provided I am near you that is all I require."

She was quite sure, while speaking thus, of returning promptly to Paris.

"Yes," returned Roger. "But you prefer that we should go back to the capital and amuse ourselves a little this winter, do you not?"

"You are wrong, my dear, to think that. I have no preference for one place more than another, and I wish everything that you wish."

What return can be made to a woman so submissive, except to outstrip what one supposes to be her desire?

Roger therefore gave orders to make immediate preparation for their departure, and they returned to Paris.

Roger had few acquaintances besides his old friends, and Sylvandire had none at all; for the judges, the counsellors, and the lawyers that frequented Maître Bouteau's hôtel could not be termed acquaintances. They were therefore satisfied to write to Cretté, d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, and Chastellux that they had come back to Paris, and that they dined every day at two and received every evening at eight.

Madame d'Anguilhem did the honors of the Hôtel de Bouzenois marvellously well, and was, on the whole, accounted charming.

On the first evening the Marquis de Cretté drew Roger apart, and having led him into an alcove, he said, —

"My dear chevalier, as I do not wish to be debarred from your house —"

"What! debarred from my house!" interrupted Roger. "What do you mean?"

"My dear fellow, you are young," answered Cretté.

"Your heart is pure and your soul is innocent. Now learn one thing. While the wife's friends are almost always the husband's, the husband's friends are rarely the wife's."

"Why is that?"

"Why? It would take too long to tell you. Perhaps I shall write two or three volumes on the subject some day when I have learned how to spell. I wish to tell you now that, whatever may be said to you against me, you have my permission to believe it, save only if it comes to pass that you are told I am paying court to Madame d'Anguilhem. You know me, Roger. I give you my word as a gentleman that your wife shall always be as sacred to me as if she were my sister."

"And never shall you be treated in my house as other than a brother," replied Roger. "Never shall you be excluded from my house until it pleases you to exclude yourself. Perish wife and fortune sooner than friendship like ours!"

"Amen!" responded Cretté.

The marquis was, in fact, very assiduous in his attendance at the chevalier's. But he was so scrupulous as never to arrive alone, and to make his hours coincide with those of everybody else. Then, too, he almost always left at the same time as the group of friends whom he had brought. In a word, faithful to his promise, Cretté limited his attentions to the husband, causing Madame d'Anguilhem to begin by despising him as an indifferent person, and to end by hating him as an enemy.

However, in a short time, the Hôtel de Bouzenois, now the Hôtel d'Anguilhem, became the rendezvous of a goodly company. Sylvandire, beautiful and gracious, attracted gallants as honey draws flies. But Cretté,

firm at his post with d'Herbigny and Clos-Renaud, drove away the flies with his conquering airs and his jests, which were always applauded by Roger. And so six months sped away without Madame d'Anguilhem's having given any grounds for gossip, whatever inclination toward it she might at heart, perhaps, have had.

She would have liked, nevertheless, to go to Versailles, and had, with this object in view, turned all her batteries in the direction of religion. But the marquis and his friends were one and all outspoken against the Old Woman, as they called Madame de Maintenon, against the Jesuit, as they called Père Letellier, against the Antiquities, as they styled the courtiers, against the old Machine, as they styled Louis XIV.

In this, as in everything, Roger was ranged on the side of his friends. And when Sylvandire insisted upon receiving into her house a more Christian society, he gave her to understand that he did not intend to convert the hotel into a monastery, and that if the abbés appeared, he would offset the black cloth with musketeers of all colors.

As will be seen, there was a great distance between Roger of Paris and Roger of Amboise, between Sylvandire's husband and Constance's lover, between the free-thinker in revolt against the cloth and the student resolved to turn Jesuit.

Sylvandire, who felt that she was not the stronger, was forced to yield.

About this time Maître Bouteau was soliciting the position of president. Roger spoke of his father-in-law's wishes to Cretté, and Cretté, with his habitually obliging spirit, threw himself into the campaign, his friends doing likewise. But, however earnest their solicitations, however skilful their plans, they saw

clearly that, depending only on their own forces, they would not succeed.

Some one then spoke to Maître Bouteau of a certain Marquis de Royancourt, a great gulper of masses, and one high in favor with the Maintenon. Maître Bouteau promptly recalled to mind that this same Marquis de Royancourt had, three or four years previously, been engaged in a lawsuit which he had won before the tribunal of which he was the *conseiller-rapporteur*.

Maître Bouteau proceeded to call on Monsieur de Royancourt, by whom he was very well received, and he reminded the marquis of the incident of the suit which the latter remembered perfectly.

Now, as Maître Bouteau thought the recommendation of a pretty woman could do his affair no harm, he requested Roger's permission to present Monsieur de Royancourt to him and his wife, — a presentation to which Roger, not being distrustful, offered no opposition.

The Marquis de Royancourt was therefore introduced to Roger, who made a thousand polite speeches, and to Sylvandire, who modestly cast down her eyes.

Roger showed Monsieur de Royancourt every courtesy, partly out of politeness, and partly because he preferred to stand well rather than ill with him. He was an all-powerful favorite admitted to the solemn suppers of Madame de Maintenon, and lording it over the antechamber of Père Letellier.

On the next day after this visit Maître Bouteau was appointed president.

It was quite natural that one should entertain with his best a man to whom one was under such obligations. Therefore, on his second visit, the marquis was still more fêted than at the first. As for Monsieur de Royancourt, he expressed to the Chevalier d'Anguilhem his



surprise that such a man as he, young, rich, and talented, should not solicit some place at court or in the army. He obligingly tendered his services. Roger, who at all times had possessed a certain fund of ambition deep in his heart, replied only with the most sincere thanks.

Thus far, — he avowed to Cretté who felt for the new-comer a degree of antipathy, — thus far, we say, the marquis had in his eyes appeared to be very kind and gracious.

But, as we have implied, there was a difference of opinion between the two friends. Cretté looked upon the Marquis de Royancourt with an unfavorable eye. He knew how tortuous were the paths of those courtiers with the sanctimonious ways, who had just established themselves as extinguishers upon all the brilliant pleasures that had marked the first two-thirds of the great king's reign. "Tartufe" would certainly not have been played in the period of Monsieur de Royancourt's influence.

As for Sylvandire, she begged her husband to accept the good offices of Madame de Maintenon's favorite.

"We shall be admitted at Versailles," she said. "Perhaps, even, we shall be assigned an apartment."

"What then?" replied Cretté. "Is it not much better to be one's own master, as Roger is, than to have to obey the peevish whims of an old king always in a bad humor, and whom nobody can amuse any longer, not even Madame de Maintenon? As to apartments, you have a dozen of them here, in every way more convenient, I promise you, than those at Versailles. Granted, however, that a regiment is given to d'Anguilhem. Why, by all the devils! although d'Anguilhem is as brave as Alexander or Hannibal or Cæsar, to me he does not seem to have the least vocation for war. I had a regiment once myself. Well, I sold out. I will

resume active service when Madame de Maintenon is no longer the minister of war."

"You, monsieur," sharply retorted Sylvandire, "are sated with pleasures and honors, and I can understand your speaking thus; but Monsieur d'Anguilhem and I are novices and are thirsty."

Cretté then turned upon his friend a questioning look, to which Roger replied by a sign in the negative. Vanquished, Sylvandire went to find her father and sent Maître Bouteau to the charge. Maître Bouteau urged forward Monsieur de Royancourt.

It happened that one day at a banquet, one Wednesday, I think, Monsieur de Royancourt, who fasted four times a week, affected to eat only fish, and reproached the chevalier politely but quite severely, nevertheless, for the small observance he gave to the commandments of the church.

Cretté and his friends anticipated a sharp retort on the part of d'Anguilhem to that importunate personage, but they waited for some time. At last Roger replied, but less sharply than the marquis' unseemly reproach merited.

"Come, come," said Cretté aside to his friend; "we are declining, and the Royancourt is in the ascendancy. Look out, d'Anguilhem, look out, you are ruled."

In fact Monsieur de Royancourt became a daily guest at the hôtel. He arrived with a grand train, with magnificent horses and insolent valets. From him Sylvandire learned all the news of the great world in which she longed to appear, but which was closed to her, like one of those enchanted gardens of the "Arabian Nights," which are guarded by dragons.

The dragon that forbade her entrance into this garden was the Marquis de Cretté, and she hated him cordially.

Roger, too, began to see clearly through these manoeuvres, and the new-comer tried his patience exceedingly.

"This Royancourt annoys me greatly," Roger said to his friend one morning. "He took my wife and my father-in-law yesterday to that Jesuit, Letellier. All this sermonizing suits me little."

"Well, go away from it all," said Cretté, who was on the most cordially familiar footing with him. "Take Sylvandire into Touraine, leave me with full power, and in your absence, never fear, I will clear the premises."

"*Parbleu!* that is an idea!" exclaimed Roger.

Thereupon, he made everything ready for their departure, but said not a word to any one, save that two hours before entering the carriage he notified Sylvandire that he should take her into the country.

Sylvandire was astounded at this bold stroke, of which she had deemed Roger incapable. Then she wished to discuss the subject, but Roger stood his ground. Then she wept, but Roger was insensible to her tears. Then the hour arrived, and she had to start without receiving the adieux of Maître Bouteau or those of Monsieur de Royancourt.

"Oh! this is monstrous!" exclaimed Sylvandire, as she entered her carriage.

"But," replied the chevalier as he took his place beside her, "but, my darling, since you are happy wherever I am, as you have assured me, of what do you complain? Let me hear."

"Monsieur, you might at least have warned me in time to take leave of my father and my friends."

"Impossible, my angel. The idea of going occurred to me just when I communicated it to you."

"Are we to stay long on your estates? I warn you beforehand that I hate the province."

"But nothing compels us to stay there eternally. We shall stay as long as we are both pleased."

And just then the postilion cracked his whip, and the carriage dashed off at full speed.

At the fourth relay they stopped for supper. Sylvandire requested that she might send news of themselves to her father, to which Roger was not at all opposed.

Sylvandire then wrote a letter, whose contents Roger's delicacy would not permit him to seek to learn. However, that letter finished, she continued to write others, which proceeding gave rise to some suspicions. But what Roger dreaded above all things was a first scene that should be at all serious; for he knew that the conjugal sea, once troubled, would never again become perfectly calm.

Nor was he willing, moreover, to question the maid who posted the letters. It seemed to him an indignity to communicate suspicions of such a nature. Then, too, perhaps he reckoned that, lucky so far, his star would always remain bright.

At Chartres, Sylvandire asked him to stay a few hours that she might pray in the cathedral.

Since Sylvandire had, as we have said, affected great piety, from the time of Monsieur de Royancourt's appearance at their house, her request did not surprise Roger. Yet, as he did not know what to do with himself during those three or four hours, he informed Sylvandire that he would take a horse and visit d'Herbigny, who had a country-seat in the neighborhood. Sylvandire took her way toward the cathedral, and Roger set out for the viscount's. Roger remained there three hours; but as he was less intimate with d'Herbigny than with Cretté, he said to him only that he and his wife were taking a pleasure-trip to Touraine.

On going back to the inn, Roger learned that Sylvandire had not returned. He waited about an hour. Then, as she did not return, he walked as far as the cathedral. Sylvandire was not at the cathedral any more than she was at the inn. He therefore went back to the Golden Cross, called for the host, and asked for information. He then learned that Sylvandire had gone off in her post-chaise with her maid. This was a cruel blow, yet he preserved entire presence of mind, and said to the landlord, —

“Nothing was wanting, was there?”

“No, monsieur,” replied the host; “and madame appeared to be quite satisfied.”

“That is well,” returned Roger, and he ascended the stairs with wrath in his heart.

He entered the room that his wife had occupied, and found on the toilet-table, still in disorder, a letter from Sylvandire, on which his address was traced in small characters, very firm and very bold.

This is what the letter contained: —

“MONSIEUR, — You thought proper to take me from home upon two hours’ notice. I, who am a woman, and under this title lay claim to a few more privileges than you, am returning to Paris, and I notify you two hours afterwards.

“SYLVANDIRE.

“Continue your journey or come back. Do not inconvenience yourself. You know I have my father and my house in Paris.”

“She has outwitted me,” said Roger, “but she shall pay for it. Ah! Cretté, you were quite right. I am no longer master; but let us wait a little, and we shall see.”

XIX.

HOW THE CONJUGAL HORIZON OF THE CHEVALIER  
D'ANGUILHEM GREW SUDDENLY TEMPESTUOUS.

As we have said, it was a cruel blow, and the more cruel in that it struck a man still on the threshold of life, still in the dawn of illusion, one whose heart had already suffered much, and the happiness of which had been too brief for it to be surfeited.

Roger, therefore, felt at once all the transports of rage, shame, and jealousy.

He ordered Breton, his valet, to procure three post-horses, and as soon as the horses were at the door of the inn, he leaped upon one, and Breton sprang upon another. The postilion bestrode the third, and all three were off at full gallop.

Motion is one of the irresistible necessities of tortured souls. The gallop of a horse that is carrying us toward certainty, a greater misfortune, perhaps, but sometimes also toward revenge, is a species of physical balm poured upon the wounds of the soul. The road vanishes behind us; the trees flee. One feels that one is advancing, nearing, arriving. A thousand feverish visions pass before the eyes. A thousand plans, each more senseless than the other, spring up in the heated brain only to be overthrown. The madder the horse's pace the more he is urged; and a demon shrieks in your ear, "Faster! faster! faster!"

Roger made the journey in five hours without resting a moment save to change horses; and yet he did not overtake Sylvandire. Breton was bruised to a pulp, but he himself was unconscious even of fatigue.

When Roger turned into the court of his hôtel, Sylvandire had been at home an hour and a half. Roger entered the salon, booted and dusty, with riding-whip in hand. Sylvandire was already arrayed in evening dress, and was gracefully leaning on her elbow on a sofa. She was conversing with Monsieur de Royancourt and three or four of his friends whom he had introduced at the Hôtel d'Anguilhem.

Such audacity astounded Roger. He felt his legs failing under him. He leaned against the door. He was as pale as death.

"It is Monsieur de la Fontaine's fable over again," murmured Roger. "*La Lice et sa compagne.*" There are four of them. Well, I will get Cretté and two friends. Then we will take a turn behind the Convent de Saint Sacrement."

However, on Roger's arrival, all rose and pressed around him, displaying so much politeness in behalf of the new-comer that none but a rustic would not have waited for a different occasion to exhibit his anger.

Besides Roger instinctively felt that sooner or later the opportunity would come.

As for Sylvandire, she contented herself with making him a sign with her hand. Then with a little gesture full of pouting coquetry, she cried, —

"What! you could appear in such disorder — ah! bad husband that you are! I certainly think I deserve that a suitable toilet should be made by one entering my salon. Will you not go and dress, my dear?"

Roger stood aghast at her self-possession. He was

seized by a strong desire to clear the house on the instant with the whip that he held in his hand; but the dread of scandal restrained him.

"You are right, madame," he responded. "But, as you knew that I was about to return, I had hoped to find you somewhat more retired."

And he stared steadily at Monsieur de Royancourt for the purpose of causing him to feel that the admonition was aimed especially at him.

Like well-bred people, Monsieur de Royancourt's three friends understood that they must raise the siege. They, therefore, incontinently withdrew. As to Monsieur de Royancourt, he lingered behind them a few moments. Then, rising in turn, he saluted Sylvandire and Roger, and effected his retreat, having delayed it, undoubtedly, only by way of silent protest against the husband's manifesto.

"What, monsieur!" exclaimed Sylvandire as soon as Monsieur de Royancourt had withdrawn, "do you thus drive people from my house?"

"What do you call *your* house, madame?" retorted Roger. "My first impression is that it would sound as well to speak of *our* house."

"Ours, yours, or mine, no matter which, I shall not discuss words with you; but, once for all, I intend to receive here whom I like."

"And I — intend to drive away from here whom I dislike."

"You are a very —"

"Well, speak out."

"A very provincial gentleman."

"And you are a sharp little limb of the law."

"Monsieur! Do you think to frighten me?"

"Frighten or not, you are going to set out with me at



once for Anguilhem. This second time, however, you will not return so quickly as you did the first time."

"You speak in this manner because you think me alone and helpless," said Sylvandire, throwing off all restraint. "But I warn you that you deceive yourself, and, upon my word, you will find that there are those who will make you repent of your behavior toward me."

"Ah! your Marquis de Royancourt!" cried Roger with exasperation. "Ah! you mean that Marquis de Royancourt of yours, do you not, madame? Well, in one hour from now, your Marquis de Royancourt shall hear from me, and, *pardieu!* if, as I judged but just now, he understands neither my looks nor words, he will, I hope, understand actions at least."

Sylvandire knew of d'Anguilhem's affair with the Kollinskis, which had made some noise in society. Besides, she had often heard of her husband's courage and skill from Cretté and d'Herbigny. She was, therefore, very much afraid of what might happen, and, darting after Roger, she stopped him as he was setting foot on the stairs to ascend to his own room for the purpose of changing his attire; for Roger was one of the men who perfectly comprehend that when honoring his enemy with a proposal to cut his throat, the proposition must be made in velvet coat and lace ruffles.

But Sylvandire did not desire a scandal, as she had grand schemes based on Monsieur de Royancourt.

She clung, then, to Roger's arm, as we have said, and sought by her tears to soften his wrath. It was the first time that Roger had seen Sylvandire weep. His heart was not iron; and so, in this struggle, when he should have won at least the field of battle, he lost all. That very evening, Monsieur de Royancourt played a game

of backgammon in the salon with Maître Bouteau, and Sylvandire was smiling.

On the same evening, Cretté, having learned of his friend's return, presented himself at the Hôtel d'Anguilhem; but Sylvandire's orders had been issued, and he was told that, while monsieur and madame had indeed returned, they were not receiving.

On the morrow the marquis wrote to Roger that he should never again set foot in his house, since its door had been closed to him at an hour when he had seen in the court, at the very foot of the steps, the coach of Monsieur de Royancourt.

He added that their friendship was ended forever.

In despair, Roger hastened to Cretté's; but he found him deeply wounded.

Roger had no difficulty in persuading him that he had nothing to do with the orders given on the evening before. Sylvandire had assured him that there had been a misunderstanding, and he was absolutely determined to convince his friend on this point; but Cretté yielded with difficulty and upon one condition.

"Listen, chevalier," said the marquis. "That refusal was an insult, an insult given by your people, and, consequently, in the eyes of everybody, proceeding from you. Reparation must be made, therefore. Some day when my carriage is at your door, Monsieur de Royancourt must receive the same answer that was given to me. On this condition, I will overlook what has happened and say no more about it."

Roger promised the marquis that it should be as he wished.

He then went home and informed his wife of the agreement that he had just made with his friend.

Sylvandire began to laugh.

But Roger was by no means in a mood for jesting, and he insisted very seriously, and pronounced, for the first time, the terrible words that a wife never forgets and a husband always repents,—

“It is my will.”

Then there was a dreadful quarrel. Sylvandire showed that she was really a veritable despot, and there followed between the two a long succession of “I insist!” and “I will not!”

“Well, if you will not,” at last said Roger, who thought to triumph by means of one of those speeches so terrible to a good woman, “well, if you will not, I shall think, madame, that you entertain very peculiar sentiments toward Monsieur de Royancourt.”

“Think whatever you are pleased to think,” returned Sylvandire.

“If Monsieur de Royancourt does not leave my house,” said Roger, “then I shall leave it; but, take heed, madame, I shall not enter it again.”

“As you please, monsieur. The world is wide, you are young, and travel will improve you.”

“Reflect, madame, I leave this moment.”

“Go, monsieur, I am not keeping you,” was Sylvandire’s response.

Roger had taken a false step, and he perceived it, but it was too late. Instead of discussing the subject with his wife, he should have given orders at his door, and all would have been said. He had broached polemics, and the demon of feminine skill had got the better of his simple wrath.

“Well, are you still there?” asked Sylvandire, seeing that he had stopped, stupefied at such audacity.

Roger took three steps toward that shameless woman; but a sense of his own dignity checked him.

"Breton," he said to his valet de chambre, "have my trunks and my carriage ready in an hour."

Then he left the salon without Sylvandire's taking a step or saying a word to detain him, and he ascended to his room.

The hour sped quickly. It was certainly the most agitated and the most sorrowful hour of Roger's life. At the slightest sound he trembled and listened, thinking to see his wife enter, with repentance in her heart, entreaty on her lips, and tears in her eyes. He would have given ten years of his life that Sylvandire might have taken such a course. But, on the other hand, he would have given up all his life rather than make a single advance toward her. His sole virtue in such a case was obstinacy. It is much to have a strong head when one has a weak heart.

The hour was spent amid such anguish and heart-beating as cannot be described, and Roger took his hat and descended to the salon.

Sylvandire sat alone at her tambour embroidery.

"And so the thing is decided," she said, as indifferently as if she were speaking of a promenade in the Bois de Satory, "you are leaving us?"

"Yes, madame," replied Roger, amazed at her coolness; "and I have the honor to wish you good-day."

"When shall we see you again?"

"I shall have the honor to apprise you hereafter."

"Adieu, chevalier."

"Adieu, madame."

And, refusing the hand extended to him by Sylvandire, Roger precipitately rushed down the flight of steps, sprang into his carriage, and shouted, —

"Drive to the Hôtel de Cretté."

At that name he had the satisfaction of hearing Syl-

vandire angrily shut the salon window which had remained half open, and behind which she was watching to see what happened.

Cretté sincerely pitied his friend.

Roger wished to go and seek Monsieur de Royancourt, to provoke him to a duel, but Cretté restrained him.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you are in a false position. You have only yourself to complain of. You have brought it about. You must be patient. Watch your wife and the marquis, get possession of proof, and then, supported by your evidence, send a challenge to Monsieur de Royancourt. But you have seen nothing; you know nothing. Yesterday, moreover, you received the man in your own house. Has anything new happened since then? Have you anything to reproach him with since yesterday? No; he has not even entered your house. Monsieur de Royancourt will tell you that he does not know what you are talking about; that you are a visionary; and everybody will blame you, I first of all."

"What is your advice, then?"

"Why, bless you! go away, since you have announced that you are going on a journey. Go to Italy, Germany, England. Take a dancer, take anything, in fact, that will distract you."

"I detest women!"

"Well, yes, that is understood, of course; but there is nothing to console a love like a fancy. Why, no longer than eight days ago, if it had not been for little Poussette, I should have blown out my brains or turned Trappist. Try it."

"No, I am going away. I shall leave Paris. I shall go mad if I stay here."

"Why do you not pay a visit to Anguilhem?"

"And what excuse could I give for my wife's absence?"

"Pooh! Mademoiselle Constance will not ask you for one."

"Constance has forgotten me, and she has done well. Constance is married, without doubt. Ah! Constance, Constance, what a difference between you and Sylvandire!"

"Ah! my friend, you are quite right. Nothing less resembles one woman than another woman. Well, go to England. You will get some pretty ideas on the way to reduce the sex to obedience. Our neighbors across the channel are extremely knowing on the subject."

"Faith, I have a great mind to follow your advice."

Cretté embraced his friend, and made no effort to comfort him. He knew perfectly well that, for such hurts, time is the only balm.

Roger went to England. He stayed there three months, and he saw two Englishmen that were unfortunate in their marriages, who led their wives to market with ropes around their necks.

One sold his wife for ten guineas, and the other for seven.

"*Pardieu!*" exclaimed Roger. "I would give mine away for nothing, for my part! I would even pay something to boot."

Unfortunately Roger was not an Englishman.

At the end of three months he was seized with a longing to return to France. As he was perfectly free and nothing hindered his doing as he pleased, he immediately set out for Dover and embarked.

Twelve hours later he landed at Calais, having suffered greatly at sea, which had been of the roughest. As

soon as he had set foot on the wharf, he was met by Cretté's valet, who was himself waiting to embark. Roger recognized him.

"What! you here, Basque?" he said. "What the devil are you doing here?"

"Ah! *mon Dieu*, monsieur le chevalier," returned Basque. "It was the will of heaven that I should meet you here. I was going in search of you."

"For what purpose?"

"To carry you a letter from my master. But speak softly, if you please, monsieur le chevalier, for I fear some one is listening to us."

"And who should listen, pray?"

"Everybody, monsieur, everybody. You do not know, then, what has happened over here?"

"Whereabouts over here?"

"In Paris."

"It is three months since I have had news."

"Well, my master was questioned day before yesterday and threatened with the Bastile."

"What is that? Cretté threatened with the Bastile?"

"Yes, monsieur le chevalier, it is true."

"And why the Bastile?"

"Because he challenged Monsieur de Royancourt, who would not fight."

"And you say that you have a letter for me?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Which gives the details?"

"Probably."

"Then deliver the letter."

"Ah, *dame!* monsieur, it is not an easy thing to do, seeing that it is sewed into the lining of my vest; but if monsieur will go with me to the Hôtel du Dauphin —"

"But why all these precautions?"

"Monsieur will presently be informed, without doubt, on reading my master's letter. When monsieur le marquis saw the police officers enter his hotel, he suspected something, and he at once wrote this letter to monsieur le chevalier, ordering me to conceal it carefully, and then he said, 'Go, little Basque, and do not rest until you have found the Chevalier d'Anguilhem.' I started immediately, and here I am."

"Then let us go to the Dauphin, my friend, without further delay, for I am in great haste to read that letter."

They moved off at once with long strides, and, on reaching the hotel, they ascended to a room and locked themselves in.

"It is disrespectful to monsieur to remove my jacket in his presence," said Basque, "but I cannot avoid it."

"Go on, and be quick about it, my lad."

Basque ripped the lining of his jacket and drew forth a letter which he handed to Roger.

Roger eagerly opened it, and read as follows:—

"MY DEAR CHEVALIER, — This is the fourth letter that I have written to you; the three others have undoubtedly been intercepted. Your wife has disappeared, and in spite of every effort I have been unable to discover her whereabouts. Yesterday morning, I met Monsieur de Royancourt on the Cours-la-Reine, and, as I had no doubt that he was concerned in Sylvandire's disappearance, I told him outright that he was a miscreant. Thereupon, supposing that he would answer me as a gentleman should, I drew my sword; but I was deceived. To my great astonishment, Monsieur de Royancourt appeared not to have heard me. At the same time, I saw some officers of police approaching, and d'Herbigny carried me off. Last evening I sent Clos-Renaud and Chastellux to him to make an appointment;



they were not received, however. This morning they have come to arrest me, it is likely. I am despatching Basque to you; if he is so lucky as to find you, don't lose a moment, but hasten back to Paris and clear all this up."

"Oh! yes," cried Roger. "Yes, I will start for Paris."

And he summoned a post-horse at once, with the fixed determination, since his wife's imprudence gave him just grounds, of slaying Monsieur de Royancourt and all his friends whom he might encounter, were there a hundred, a thousand of them; and, as one may readily believe, the speed of his journey only heated his blood. But, arrived at the Cours-la-Reine, as the chevalier was about to enter Paris, an officer stopped his chaise while he bowed almost to the ground. Roger's first desire was to run the man through and through with his sword, and inaugurate with him the butchery that he meditated; but the officer took three steps backward, and, producing a document from his pocket, said, —

"By the order of the king, Chevalier d'Anguilhem, you are commanded to deliver up your sword."

An hour later the chevalier was registered at For-l'Évêque.

XX.

FINDING THAT PERMISSION TO LEAVE IS NOT GRANTED HIM, THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM RESOLVES TO LEAVE WITHOUT PERMISSION.

A MAN struck by a thunder-bolt does not burst into tears and lamentations; on the contrary, he remains motionless, senseless, breathless, bewildered; but, under the apparent apathy, nature acts, the connection between senses and organs, for a moment broken off, is re-established in his being, and feeling returns when he has regained strength enough to realize his condition and to endure it.

Roger, therefore, entered For-l'Évêque like one struck by a thunder-bolt. He had not notified Basque of his determination; he had, on the contrary, advised him to lie down, advice which Basque had gratefully taken, and while the poor devil was sleeping with clinched fists, Roger had leaped upon the post-horse and started at full speed for Paris.

He had not been willing to have Basque follow him, in the first place, because the poor fellow was worn out, and next, for fear of compromising Cretté. Moreover, he had at once burned the letter that he had received from the marquis, in order that none could accuse the marquis of being concerned in his action. All that Basque had told kept running in his head, and he had no suspicion that all the spies of Maître Voyer d'Argenson were at his heels.

When within ten leagues of Paris he took a carriage; he had made fifty leagues in fifteen hours, and he was bruised to a jelly. In the carriage he began to regain his spirits; for he still divined nothing. The officer took it upon himself to give him a clue to the enigma in the shape of his arrest.

And Roger was astounded, as we have said.

"Ah! I am arrested," he kept repeating to himself along the road. "Ah! I am arrested."

And, at each exclamation, the officer bowed with great courtesy, but made no reply.

The carriage turned into the court-yard of the château. Roger descended. A man in a coat of orange-colored velvet, with gold buttons, came forward, and indicated aloud to an officer the room assigned to Monsieur d'Anguilhem; he then read over in a muttering way the official report of the arrest, which had been scrawled in the carriage on the road by one of the officers, without the prisoner's having even noticed it.

Then he spoke, —

"Very well."

And he made a sign that the Chevalier d'Anguilhem should be conducted to the room designated.

Roger followed his guide, without speech, without sign of protest.

At that moment they might have shown Roger a scaffold covered with black cloth, with its block and ax; they might have made him a sign to kneel at the block and bow his head to receive the fatal blow, and he would have obeyed without the slightest hesitation. All the adventures which were following so closely upon each other seemed to have such intimate relations that he submitted to their results without knowing the reason; but he kept on, he went mechanically, bending his head

and accepting his absurd destiny, as in a dream one performs without hesitation and without astonishment the most monstrous follies.

This is why he passed almost unconsciously, almost without seeing, from a gloomy staircase into a very handsome gallery; then, from the gallery he took a winding stairway, went up an infinite number of flights, passed along another corridor, from the corridor into a sort of lumber-room and thence into a small apartment, dark but quite neat. The door closed behind him, the bolts grated, and Roger was aroused by the sound.

He found himself sitting on a sort of stool; he shook his head, looked around him, arose and went the length of his room, which was not far.

Then, moved by an instinct stronger than all others, he came to a standstill before a narrow, double-grated window through whose crossed bars a little light and air were permitted to infiltrate.

Light! air! life!

This poor Roger, this poor country gentleman, accustomed to take into his great lungs such quantities of the vital fluid, while hunting the woods and fields of Anguilehem, was reduced to struggle for breath and a ray of light at a chink in a wall!

We say to struggle, because the window was so narrow that a man could not put out his head. It was hewn with four sharp edges out of stones of enormous size, and two sets of bars at a distance of a foot apart crossed each other, as we have said, in the depths of the wall; then, at the outer aperture of the window, the prisoner could get a glimpse of a strip of sky against which nothing was outlined, not even a tree, not even a weathervane.

On fine days, Roger watched there for a cloud; on rainy days he watched for a bit of azure.

The situation was sad, and it was all the sadder that Roger had often pondered over the misfortunes that might happen to him, to the end that he might be prepared for them, but never had he dreamed of imprisonment; hence he was not at all prepared for it.

He sat down on his stool to reflect, then he looked at the worm-eaten table over which had been thrown a piece of tapestry, then he got up and proceeded to try his bed, which was very hard; and then, at last, he went back and sat down on his stool where he gave himself up to the strangest reveries.

That he was in prison was incontestable; but who had caused him to be cast into prison, and for what reason was he imprisoned? This was the problem to be solved.

No one can tell whither will wander the thoughts of a man who has nothing to do but to think; Roger's overran the whole earth, and every possibility. His first and foremost belief was that he must be the victim of an error.

"Perhaps," he thought, "my father has formed a conspiracy in the province, and I am supposed to be his agent."

Although Monsieur le Baron d'Anguilhem had been infinitely less displeased with the government of Louis XIV. since he became the heir of Monsieur de Bouzenois, his son, who had often heard him launch forth into complaints against Madame de Maintenon and Père Letellier, could indulge in such a supposition without great absurdity. And, for the moment, this idea was almost satisfactory to Roger.

"I shall prove," he thought, "that I have been in England for three months, that I have come directly from there, that it is eighteen months since I was last at Anguilhem, and that I have not seen my father for a

year. In the light of such evidence, my innocence will be apparent, and I shall be released in triumph."

And Roger was quite tranquil for the space of half an hour.

"Ah! yes," he began at the end of the half-hour, "but what if they think I have been in England to act in concert with the Prince of Orange, who has sworn eternal enmity to Louis XIV.? What if they think my journey to England was taken for the purpose of fomenting rebellions! In that case, I am lost!"

And Roger sat plunged in despair for another half hour.

"But still," he said to himself at the end of this half hour, "may not my affair have some connection with Cretté's?"

In fact, he could not think it was because of his affair with Monsieur de Royancourt that Cretté had been arrested, or rather, that it was solely because of that affair.

"Cretté," he told himself, "has the reputation of being an enemy of the Old Woman, as he is, in fact, and he has incurred her dislike. This Royancourt must execrate him. The king is severe with respect to duelling; perhaps he shut his eyes on our first affair with the Kollinskis, and spared our heads that time only for want of proof. To-day, on Cretté's simple challenge they base a second offence. Yes, but for my part, I am quite innocent of that, as I was in London when the marquis challenged Monsieur de Royancourt in Paris."

He then fell to thinking of his wife.

"She has disappeared," he said; "can it be possible that they think I have murdered her?"

And, at this thought, his mind dwelt no longer on anything but his wife's strange conduct toward him; and

then he fell into an access of rage, for Roger, as the reader must have perceived, was as jealous as a tiger, and it must be admitted that Sylvandire had given him some occasion for jealousy.

The hour for exercise had arrived; they came to fetch Roger.

For two hours daily the prisoners were allowed a promenade.

The promenade took place on the platform.

Roger found eight prisoners on the platform, eight companions of misfortune, all of greatly differing equipment and countenance.

One could almost read from their faces and habiliments the dates of their incarceration.

"What is the news in Paris, monsieur?" cried all the eight voices together.

"Faith, gentlemen," answered the Chevalier d'Anguilhem, "the news of my arrest; however, as the event happened five or six hours ago, perhaps they no longer speak of it now, and are beginning to occupy themselves with something else."

"Ah! you are arrested?"

"*Parbleu!* you certainly see that; you are not here of your own accord, are you?"

"No, certes."

"Well, neither am I."

"But why were you arrested?"

"That is what I have been trying to discover ever since morning, and if you can tell me, you will really extricate me from a great difficulty."

"What! you do not know why you were arrested?"

"No, — and you?"

"No more than you."

"And you?"

"No more than you."

"And you?"

"No more than you."

He found that the same question, addressed eight times to the prisoners, eight times produced the same response.

Among these eight captives, not one knew the cause of his captivity, and one of them moreover had been in For-l'Évêque for ten years.

He was the most calm, the most resigned.

Roger shuddered. He had not yet spent in prison as many hours as his companion had spent years.

And yet he had found the time very wearisome already.

"Ah!" thought Roger, gloomily, "I am as good as dead."

However, one always hopes that the fate of others, when bad, may not be one's own, so Roger asked his companions in captivity if he could speak to some of the authorities of the château.

"You can summon the governor when you please," was the reply.

"What! I can summon the governor?"

"Certainly."

"Simply by asking for him?"

"Simply that."

"Then I shall ask for him this evening. Messieurs, I bid you adieu."

"Adieu! and why?"

"Because I shall probably not have the honor of seeing you to-morrow."

"And why not?"

"If I see the governor this evening, I shall to-morrow, without doubt, be set at liberty."



"Poor fellow!" murmured the prisoners as they shook their heads.

Neither exclamation nor gesture prevented Roger's returning to his room in a state of elation.

His dinner was served, and he very resolutely ate the king's bread and beans.

Then, toward the end of the repast, he begged the turnkey to say to the governor of For-l'Évêque that his new prisoner desired very much to speak with him.

"It is too late to-night," replied the turnkey, "but monsieur le gouverneur will come to you to-morrow without fail."

"You are sure of it, my friend?"

"I am sure of it."

"To-morrow, then," said Roger, gathering patience as he reflected that a night is soon past.

And he went and sat down on his stool to watch through the bars of his window the last gleam of day.

He sat there, gazing at the sky and lost in meditation, when it seemed to him that he heard a slight noise close at hand.

He lowered his eyes to the floor and discovered a mouse nibbling the crumbs that had fallen.

Roger hated mice. He seized his hat and flung it at the poor little creature, which scampered away in terror and crept under the door into the large room adjoining, where she had, in all probability, taken up her abode.

For a moment, Roger was greatly disturbed at thought of the intruders that might come to pay him a visit during the night. In consequence, as long as there was a ray of light in the room, he sat with his eyes fixed upon that little aperture. Then, when night was closing in, he took the cork from his bottle which still remained on the table, and, thanks to this mate-

rial obstacle to a second visit, he remained quite at ease.

However, three or four times he awoke with a start, thinking always that he felt the little paws running over his face and hands; but, each time he managed to convince himself that there was no living creature in the room besides himself.

But such was not the case with the neighboring room, which seemed to be the rendezvous of all the cats, rats, and mice in the château.

In spite of all this Roger passed a good night: he hoped.

At noon of the next day, an hour that seemed a long time in coming, an unusual noise sounded in the corridor. Soldiers were presenting arms, steps were approaching Roger's door, a key turned in the lock, the door opened, and the governor entered.

He was a tall, spare man, whose lips scarcely moved when he spoke, and whose eyes said absolutely nothing. He held his hat in his hand, probably that he need not remove it upon entering.

"Monsieur le gouverneur," said Roger, springing to meet him, "I am the Chevalier Roger d'Anguilhem."

"I know it, monsieur," replied the governor, with an almost imperceptible movement of the lips.

"You know it?" demanded the chevalier in astonishment.

The governor bowed.

"Well, as you know who I am, monsieur le gouverneur, I should like —"

"Have you any fault to find with the regimen of the house, monsieur le chevalier?"

"No, not yet, monsieur. Besides, I have not had time to learn very precisely what it is; but I should like to know —"

"Is there anything that you lack, monsieur le chevalier?"

"Nothing, just at present; but can I know —"

"Have any of the servants of the château been wanting in civility, monsieur le chevalier?"

"No, monsieur. I have even remarked the politeness of those who serve me."

"In that case, monsieur le chevalier, since you have nothing to complain of, permit me to retire."

"Pardon me, monsieur, pardon me. I complain of being in prison."

"Ah! that does not concern me," returned the governor.

"But, tell me, why am I here?"

"You must know better than I, monsieur le chevalier."

"Better than you! Why so?"

"Because it concerns you, while, as I have had the honor of telling you, it does not concern me, and I meddle only with my own affairs."

"But you must know —"

"I know nothing, monsieur."

"But you can guess —"

"I guess at nothing, monsieur. The king sends me a prisoner, I enter him in the register, I lodge him, I see that he wants for nothing so long as he is my boarder. It is my duty, and I discharge it scrupulously."

"But the king may be deceived."

"The king is never deceived."

"But the king may be wrong."

"The king is never wrong."

"Nevertheless, I swear that I have done nothing at all."

"Monsieur, excuse me from listening to you longer."

"Monsieur, I protest that I am innocent."

"Monsieur, permit me to retire."

"But tell me, at least, if I shall remain here long, — yes or no? Monsieur, I implore you."

"As long as it shall please the king."

"Ah! that will do," cried Roger, "you drive me mad."

"I am your humble servant, monsieur."

And the governor saluted Roger, and withdrew, hat in hand, and attended by his guards.

This time the door closed, it seemed to Roger, with a sinister sound. Only then did he feel himself a prisoner. He sank upon his bench, and then his eyes, fixed and mournful, settled on that door, and, after a little time, filled with tears.

Roger thought of his parents, his friends, his God.

And then all the tales of captivity, more terrible at that period than at any other, came into his head: Bassompierre, for ten years a prisoner of the Bastille; Lauzun, held thirteen years at Pignerol; Fouquet, alive or dead, none knew where. He saw passing, one after the other, before him all those gentlemen who had been spirited away by night, and had disappeared. There were Mattioli, the Man of the Iron Mask, and that man even whom he had seen the night before, and who had been there ten years. True, all these men had committed some offence: Bassompierre had essayed to strive against Richelieu; Lauzun had compromised a granddaughter of Henry IV.; Fouquet had dared vie with Louis XIV. in luxury; Mattioli had betrayed a state secret; the Iron Mask was a political enigma. But in vain did he, Roger, rack his memory, question his past, scrutinize every day of his life; there was no crime, no misdemeanor, no imprudence even, with which to reproach himself, while all the world knew of the wrongdoing of those whose remembrance arose in his mind.

Yet the world did not know what that man had done who had spoken to him the night before, whose name, even, he did not know, and who had been there ten years.

Ten years ! But did the man, then, have no relatives to solicit his pardon, or friends to take the proper steps with the ministers ? Was the man quite obscure, then ? Yet, if he was obscure, why had he been ten years in *For-l'Évêque* ?

This question harassed Roger greatly for an hour or two ; then he returned to the charge, and he made out such an excellent case for himself, that by degrees the feeling of security inspired by his innocence began to regain the upper hand, and all his gloomy thoughts were dissipated.

At the hour for exercise, Roger was taken out as on the preceding day ; he was led to the esplanade, where, as on the preceding day, he found his eight companions.

He went up to the one who had been there ten years and asked his name.

"I am the Comte d'Olibarus," responded the latter.

Roger searched his memory ; that name was quite unknown to him.

"And what is the cause of your being here ? Come, comte, just between ourselves, tell me that."

"I can only repeat what I have already told you, monsieur,—I know nothing about it."

"You know nothing about it ?"

"Nothing, monsieur."

"But," said Roger, lowering his voice, "during the ten years of your imprisonment have you made no attempt to escape ?"

The Comte d'Olibarus gazed steadily at Roger, and turned his back upon him without replying. He took him for a spy.

"*Pardieu!*" muttered Roger to himself. "If I had been here ten years, I think I should have tried ten times to escape."

Then he added, still to himself,—

"Stop, stop, stop! although I have not been here ten years, why should I not try to get away, just the same?"

This reflection made, Roger drew near to his companions; but they all scattered from his path as if he had been the plague.

The Comte d'Olibarus had communicated to them his suspicions, and the confidence bore its fruit.

Roger was unable, therefore, to exchange a word with his fellow-prisoners, which put him into a very bad humor, and confirmed him in his mental determination to quit For-l'Évêque as soon as possible.

He resolved, then, to give the king eight days, reckoning from that moment, in which to repair the injustice which had been committed against himself, and if, at the end of those eight days, the injustice were not repaired, to bend all the faculties of his mind to one single idea:—

Escape!

## XXI.

HOW THE KING NEGLECTED TO REPAIR THE INJUSTICE DONE THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

UNDER similar, although less important circumstances, we have already seen Roger at work. His resolution once taken, the reader knows with what persistence he sets about its accomplishment.

Eight days passed away, during which time Roger would have thought himself lacking in the confidence due to His Majesty, had he thought the least in the world of a project to be executed only in case of neglect. A thousand ideas presented themselves to his mind, all relating to flight, but he courageously repressed them. During the eight days time did not pass very heavily, although his companions of the terrace continued to shun him. Hope was always at his side, and every time his door opened he thought that the king, attacked by remorse, was about to repair his error.

The king probably had something else than remorse on hand. He therefore did not relent, and the eight days ran away without reparation of the wrong committed against the Chevalier d'Anguilhem.

The last minute of the last hour of the last day expired, and Roger returned seriously to his project.

He began by examining his prison. There were, —

An oak door three inches thick.

A window with double grating.

Walls four feet through.





LOUIS XIV.

. SYLVANDRE, 282.





That was the sum of his discoveries.

It left him no great degree of hope.

Roger shook the door. Two locks and two bolts were answerable for its security.

Roger tried the bars at the window. They were deeply imbedded in the masonry.

Roger sounded the walls. They everywhere gave back a dull sound indicating that they were perfectly solid.

It would have taken a crowbar to pry the door open.

It would have taken a file to cut the bars of the window.

It would have taken a pickaxe to dig a hole in the walls of that room.

Roger had none of them.

But he had the intelligence of a man bred in the country, and used to extricating himself from the thousand and one little embarrassments of life. He had the patience of the prisoner pursuing for hours, days, years, the prisoner's one and only thought, — deliverance.

He examined the interior. He would examine the exterior.

According to the custom, they came to take him out for the promenade. On leaving his little room, he crossed the large chamber which preceded it, and in which all the cats and rats of the vicinity continued every night to congregate for sport.

It was a sort of store-room with one ungrated window, opening Roger knew not where, for he was not allowed to go near the window, and for his part, he took good care not to ask permission to do so. This store-room was filled with old mattresses, bed-covers, curtains of serge, and chests. One would have said it was the shop of a retail upholsterer.

One can understand why cats, rats, and mice enjoyed a room like that.

Roger had to follow a long corridor. This corridor was closed by two doors, one opening into the room in front of his own, and the other upon a winding staircase leading to the platform.

These two doors were carefully bolted. A sentinel paced up and down the space between them.

This time Roger made no attempt to engage in conversation with his companions in captivity. His plan appealed to him, and to it he applied his thought.

Roger spent the two hours in waiting for the time to come for him to re-enter his prison. It was useless to think of escaping by way of the platform, as there would be two doors to beat down and a sentinel to overcome.

All his hopes, therefore, were centred on the store-room. Hence, on re-entering, Roger observed it with greater attention than he had yet bestowed upon it. The sounds that reached him from the window indicated that it overlooked the street. There was plenty of cloth in the bed-ticking and blankets for making a rope.

Everything was to be hoped for, then, from the store-room.

Roger went into his room, and the door was shut upon him with its double lock and double bolts.

The prisoner's mind was centred upon one idea, — that his escape, if it were possible, could be accomplished only through the store-room.

Roger was separated from liberty only by a door. But what a door! A wall of oak three inches thick fitted into a wall of stone!

Not a screw, not a nail, was on the side toward Roger's cell. All the work of construction was on the outside. Consequently, there was no chance to unscrew

bolts or locks even with the proper tool with which to do it.

But the tool, — he had not even that.

Supper was brought to the prisoner. He cast a long look through the open doorway and heard the cries of passing street-venders.

Roger ate his supper. Then, supper over, he threw himself upon his bed.

After a while he heard a slight sound. He craned his neck and saw the little mouse, which, reassured by the stillness, ventured to come and eat again of the crumbs from his table.

This time Roger was quite astonished that he felt none of his former dread of the rodent species. This little animal coming to visit the prisoner and petitioning to be allowed to live from his superfluity already inspired him with more of interest than of repugnance. Besides, Roger began to suffer ennui, and the visitor promised diversion.

And so, in his pride, he wished to address to it some words of encouragement, convinced that the mouse was waiting only for those few words to come, full of gratitude for the honor paid him; but the mouse, having, on the contrary, ventured into the room only on the conviction that its enemy was not there, had scarcely heard the chevalier's voice before it disappeared like a flash.

Having railed against the injustice of man, Roger now railed against the ingratitude of mice.

Then night came. Roger undressed and went to bed. As it was against the regulations to give prisoners a light, the prisoners went to bed at sunset.

Unfortunately for Roger, he had, since leaving d'Anguilhem, lost the habit of going to bed early. On

the contrary, during his visit to Paris, he had contracted that of sitting up very late. That was the epoch of little suppers, and Roger went to bed only about two o'clock in the morning. Besides, when he used to retire at eight o'clock in the evening, at Anguilhem, it was after a hard day spent in hunting, riding, or fencing. In that life, physical weariness very quickly invited sleep; but in prison it was a very different thing. The turgid stream that boiled in his veins had now no outlet of escape. The blood rushed to the prisoner's head. His arteries throbbed as if he had a fever. He closed his eyes, and fell into the sort of somnolence which is neither waking nor sleeping. And then the most extraordinary visions would pass before his eyes. This night wore on as he turned and tossed. Then, at about two o'clock in the morning, he fell into a leaden sleep, into which, after a time, crept troubled dreams. He grew wings like a bird and flew away through the window. He turned into a mouse and slipped out under the door. Then just as he was running along the gutters, or traversing the skyey plains, feet or wings would suddenly fail, and he would find himself whirling down through infinite depths, to awake before reaching the bottom, his heart bounding, his lungs panting, and his forehead dripping with perspiration.

From then until daylight there was no going to sleep again.

With the sun's first ray, Roger sprang out of bed. Forthwith he began to prowls around his cell like a bear in a cage, examining window and walls, but always ending by halting in front of the door.

That accursed door, which wanted only the inscription of despair to resemble that of the infernal regions!

It was certainly through that door that he would have to pass.

Roger's morning meal was brought. He ate rapidly, scattering as much bread as possible on the floor, throwing crumbs as far as the door, and stationed himself on his stool in the corner farthest from the door.

Thanks to all these preparations, he very soon saw his neighbor's sharp nose.

In spite of the impunity with which she had invaded the room on the night before, and of Roger's encouragement, the little creature hesitated long before venturing further. She withdrew her nose, put it back, again withdrew it; but at last attracted by the crumbs strewn over the boards, and especially by Roger's immovability, she darted into the room, stopping suddenly as if frightened at her own hardihood; but soon, reassured by her apparent safety, she began to nibble at the crumbs with a multitude of little grimaces, skips, and antics which greatly amused Roger. Roger would never have believed that a mouse could be so diverting.

Unfortunately, Roger, who had sat as motionless as a statue, felt himself seized by a cramp in the leg, and made a movement so abrupt that the mouse took to flight.

On the instant Roger reflected that under either of two conditions he could do as the mouse had just done. First, if he were the size of the hole; second, if the hole were the size of him.

It was evident that only one of the two conditions was among the possibilities.

This proposition being thoroughly demonstrated to Roger, since its meaning was, as we have said, perfectly evident, he put to himself the following question, —

“How can a hole be made in wood?”



And he answered, —

“In two ways: with iron and with fire.”

To procure an iron implement was impossible.

To obtain fire was difficult merely.

Roger arrived at this conclusion, —

“I must have fire.”

Unhappily there was no excuse for complaining of cold. It was midsummer, and Roger well knew that he would never have patience to wait for winter. And besides, between this time and that the governor might take it into his head to change his room.

Roger then began to study the ways and means of procuring fire.

That very evening his plan was decided upon.

At nine o'clock the sentinel on duty in the corridor heard groaning. He listened at each end of the passage alternately, and was satisfied that the groaning issued from Roger's room.

At ten o'clock, when the first round was passing, the sentinel communicated his observations to the officer in command. The officer approached the door and satisfied himself as to the truth of the sentinel's report. Moans and groans were issuing from Roger's room, and, as Roger was alone on that side, there could be no mistake about it. It was he that was doing the groaning and moaning.

A turnkey was called.

The turnkey came, opened Roger's door, and found the prisoner extended upon his bed and complaining of horrible pains in his stomach. The resident physician was summoned. He came, and ordered an infusion of linden-leaves for the sick man, tea not having been discovered at that date.

The next morning Roger kept his bed, still complain-

ing of pains which, he said, resembled burning. About two o'clock, nevertheless, he ate some soup brought to him from the governor's own table. But the soup swallowed, the groaning recommenced. The doctor ascended again, and Roger informed the doctor that he knew they meant to poison him.

The doctor immediately administered antidotes; but, as he had suspected, he found not an atom of any poisonous substance in what the prisoner had eaten.

Roger nevertheless persisted in representing himself as a victim of poison, and he declared that he would die of hunger rather than eat any food from that moment that had not been prepared by himself.

The remainder of the day Roger kept his word. He did not touch his supper, which the warden found intact on taking him his breakfast the next morning.

At the hour of exercise Roger asked to be let out; but he was told that the hour had been changed. It was feared that if Roger found himself on the platform with the other prisoners, he might complain to them of having been poisoned, and that the calumny might be received by his comrades as truth.

They did not come for him, therefore, until about five o'clock. Roger had not eaten since noon of the day before. He was very pale and apparently suffered much. He was unable to continue standing on the platform, and they were obliged to bring him a chair. He remained seated all the time.

On returning through the store-room which led to his own room, he felt ill, but did not faint quite away. Then, in weakened tones, he asked for air, and was led to the window.

Roger put his head outside of the dormer, and he saw that the opening overlooked the Quai de la Vallée-de-

Misère. A distance of sixty feet, at the least, separated him from the ground, and, as all the other windows in the stories below were furnished with iron bars, he saw beneath him a forest of gratings, whose points were upturned toward him. Roger shuddered at the sight, which circumstance his warden naturally set down to his illness; but Roger decided nevertheless that he would escape by that route.

Again in his room, Roger persisted in refusing every form of nourishment, continuing to declare that he would much rather die of hunger than of poison.

Such an accusation was too grave not to disturb the governor. So the next morning at breakfast-time, he presented himself at his boarder's room. He found the supper just as it had been left the night before. It was almost fifty hours since Roger had eaten.

Hence Roger was very weak and greatly changed. The governor entered the most reassuring protests, offering to taste in his presence everything that was brought to him; but Roger steadily refused to eat, saying that such a demonstration would prove nothing, since the governor, either before or after eating, could take some antidote and thus neutralize the effect of the poison.

The governor was very much perplexed. He had not been told the cause of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem's imprisonment. It might be for a trivial offence, or it might be for a serious one, and, in either case, the king might at any time wish to have his prisoner produced alive, whether to set him free or to punish him. He therefore asked Roger what he desired, promising him to do all that he was able to satisfy him, if, however, the desire came within his power.

Roger renewed the request that he had already made, that is, that he might himself prepare his own food.

Otherwise, he declared that he had suffered so much from the two poisonings to which he had been subjected that he was ready to let himself perish of hunger.

As, upon the whole, the governor saw no great harm in doing what Roger asked, he granted his request. In the meantime, as Roger was very weak, they sent him up two eggs so newly-laid that they were yet warm, and a bottle of Bordeaux wine.

As the eggs had no visible crack, as the bottle of Bordeaux seemed to have been corked a long time, and as the seal upon it was perfectly intact, Roger made no difficulty about swallowing the two eggs and drinking a glass of wine.

Needless to say, the prisoner experienced no indisposition after taking this light repast.

But, light as it was, it somewhat restored Roger's strength. Roger, who was little used to observing fasts, had suffered terribly from this one which had been self-imposed, and, had the governor not so obligingly extricated him from his predicament, he might perhaps have lacked courage to play much longer the comedy that he had planned.

At last he had gained his end. They brought him a chafing-dish, a pair of bellows, some embers, a few plates, a few earthen saucepans, and then eggs, vegetables, and butter.

Besides there was a great urn full of water.

Roger was a hunter, which means that more than once when coursing the Anguilhem estate, or neighboring territory, he had had occasion to prepare his own dinner. He was therefore not at all embarrassed when it became a question of putting to use the utensils that had been brought him; and, whether fasting had prepared him to enjoy the meal, or whether indeed his ideas of the culi-

nary art were instinctive or acquired, — or, as says Brillat-Savarin of gastronomic fame, whether he had become a cook or was born a chef, — he did ample justice to the dinner prepared by himself.

During the night following this meal no groans disturbed the sentinel, who, moreover, was reputed to have a very acute ear. Also, on that night, Roger, suspecting that the strictest watchfulness had been enjoined, was content to go to sleep, and he slept even more soundly, it is probable, than he had done at any time since entering the prison.

The next morning the governor came in person to inform himself concerning his prisoner's health. He found him risen, and engaged in preparing his breakfast. These promising conditions exempted the governor from a prolonged interview. He contented himself, therefore, with asking Roger about his health, and receiving thanks for his favors. He then took his leave with the same vacant look, the same immobility of the lips that the prisoner had remarked in his host at the time of the first visit that he had received from him.

At five o'clock they came to take Roger for his customary exercise. The measure adopted by the governor, of allowing him no communication with the other prisoners, was still enforced. Roger walked alone, then, and meditated on his plan, which he had decided to put into operation the following night.

The remainder of the afternoon and all the next day passed without event. Nothing occurred to change the plan as decided upon. The auguries were neither good nor bad. There was neither comet nor eclipse of the sun. Roger therefore experienced not even a moment of indecision.

A stout heart, moreover, was Roger's ordinarily, as we have said, and one especially unyielding in carrying out his resolutions.

Yet it was with beating heart that he saw night arrive. But, we hasten to add, his emotion did not arise from the dangers to which he was about to expose himself, but from the fear that some unforeseen circumstance might prevent his escape. Nevertheless, he dined at his usual hour, and with his ordinary appetite, and when his room was visited, as usual, at about eight o'clock in the evening, he was found already in bed and quite settled for the night.

There were two hours to wait. The first round was made at ten o'clock in the evening, and the second at three o'clock in the morning. Now, it occasionally happened, rarely it is true, but it had already happened twice since Roger had been in *For-l'Évêque*, that the officer caused the doors of the cells to be opened, and scrutinized the walls and the bars to assure himself that the prisoners were meditating no attempt at escape. Hence Roger could not act upon his plans before ten o'clock.

And Roger did well to wait. For, at the usual hour, the steps of the patrol began to be heard, then the steps drew nearer, then the store-room door was opened, then that of Roger's room. Roger feared for a moment that all was discovered; but he immediately reflected that the thing was impossible, since no preparations had been made in advance that could betray him, nor had he any confidant who could denounce him. He thereupon composed his countenance, and appeared to have been aroused from the deepest slumber. As Roger had supposed, it was merely a precautionary measure, and, after sounding the walls, shaking the bars, and scrutinizing the door, the officer went out saying, —

“ Very well ! ”

The prisoner sat up in his bed, listening to the sound of the retreating footsteps. Then, when every noise, every sound, every echo had died away in the prison depths, he cautiously got out of bed, walking with bare feet. He went to the door and listened. All was quiet, all was silent. He breathed again.

In an instant Roger was dressed.

Having been arrested just as he was, since Basque was to bring his trunks, which, setting off at a moment's notice, he had been unable to take with him, Roger had succeeded in having some shirts made and some handkerchiefs bought. From the chest, then, in which his linen was kept, he began to take everything that could be twisted into rope or woven into strands, to form, in short, a substitute for a ladder. Then he laid it all on his bed, and, to lose no time, he heaped against the door a pile of charcoal which he lighted. After that he returned to his ladder.

First, the sheets and coverlets of the bed were used. Next, at the end of the sheets and coverlets, torn into strips, he knotted the twisted shirts and braided handkerchiefs. During all this time the coal was burning, and, in order not to be asphyxiated, Roger was obliged to go to the window every five minutes for air. The night was pitch-dark, and such as was needed for a plan as hazardous as Roger's.

Meanwhile, the coal, converted into embers, accomplished its work. A horrible smoke ensued; but, fortunately, the wind blew in at the window from the quay, so that all smoke was driven back into the room of the prisoner, whom it would certainly have suffocated, had he not, as we have said, thrust his face between the bars of the window from time to time.

Roger heard eleven o'clock strike, and half-past eleven.

At last, toward midnight, the hole made in the door, and shaped like the mouth of an oven, seemed to him large enough to pass through. He extinguished the fire with water, cleared away the dead embers, enlarged the opening still more by breaking out portions of the charred wood, and then he lay down on his back, and, with the part of the rope already prepared in his hand, he crawled through like a snake, and a moment later found himself in the store-room.

Here he was able to breathe more freely. Then he went and listened at the door of the corridor, where he heard the slow, measured tread of the sentinel.

All was going well.

He then proceeded to grope his way toward the place where, when passing through, he had seen a heap of blankets, and to the rope already made he began to add the strips which he noiselessly tore off, and by the aid of which he thought to give his perilous ladder a length sufficient to carry him to the ground.

The rope completed, he looked about for a place to which it could be fastened; but the window presented no brace strong enough to risk his life upon it. He remembered then that his bed had four posts, originally designed to carry a tester now wanting. He returned to his room by the same route that he had come out, unscrewed one of the four posts, transferred it to the store-room, tied the rope to the middle of the post, placed the post across the window in such a way that it was perfectly secure. Then, recommending his soul to God, murmuring the names of his father and mother, and giving a last thought to Constance, he crept backward through the window, and, clutching the rope with both hands and knees, he began his slow and perilous descent



into the abyss, down which the morning before, he had been unable to look without a shudder.

As we have said, the distance between the window and the ground was more than sixty feet. In addition to the courage required for undertaking this task, marvellous skill and strength were needed for its execution. But Roger was strong and agile. He did not hurry himself in any way. Not one of his movements was quicker than another. At every knot, he paused a moment to rest, using his feet to clear himself from the sharp bars of the windows. He counted thus three stories that he had passed. Then, suddenly, he felt nothing more between his knees; he searched in vain. He had come to the end of the rope. He groped about with his feet for some support, but he found nothing. He tried to penetrate the gloom around him, but the night was so black that he could see nothing. It might have been a bottomless abyss. For an instant he thought of climbing back and adding new strips of linen to those he had knotted together, but he felt that his strength would desert him before he had gone half-way. Then a cold sweat overspread his forehead. He was as likely to be twenty feet as two feet from the ground. He knew that it had become a question of good luck or bad luck, that his life was in the hands of fate. He lowered himself to the very end of the rope. Then, murmuring a few words of prayer, he abandoned himself to his fate and let go the rope.

Almost instantly a half-stifled cry of pain reached the sentinel, and he gave the alarm. The people ran out with torches, and discovered Roger, who had fainted away, caught on the top of an iron bar whose point had pierced his thigh.

XXII.

HOW THE KING AT LAST REMEMBERS THE CHEVALIER  
D'ANGUILHEM, AND WHAT COMES OF IT.

WHEN Roger came to himself he was in a strange room. A doctor was at his side, and he was in a better and cleaner bed than prison beds are wont to be, hence for an instant he thought he was free; but, unfortunately for the chevalier, such was not the case. The governor had caused him to be transferred for the time being to a room of his own suite.

The wound was severe without being dangerous, although Roger was very weak, owing to the loss of an enormous quantity of blood. His first thought was to discover whether he could not profit by the accident itself to attempt a second escape. On a pretext of needing air, he begged the physician to open the window; like the other windows of For-l'Évêque, the window was provided with a grating on the outside.

When the surgeon took his leave, charging Roger to rest, Roger heard the door secured behind him with double fastenings. Roger was in a prison, a trifle more commodious, a trifle more elegant, but it was still a prison.

The next morning, the governor in person came to pay him a visit, and to learn directly from himself the reasons that had induced him to attempt so perilous an escape; he desired, he said, to be assured that it had been neither the fare, which was rather frugal, perhaps, nor the rules of the house, somewhat strict, it might be, that had led him to the desperate act. Roger replied that neither

had been the cause. He knew that people were as well off in For-l'Évêque as they could be in any prison, and only his desire to regain the liberty that he had not deserved to lose had brought him to that extremity. The governor entreated him to sign a declaration to that effect, which, he said, would constitute his own defence with the authorities. Roger instantly complied with his request.

Indeed, Roger saw a ray of hope in that very declaration. In his simplicity of soul, the poor boy still believed himself the victim of a mistake, which, one day or another, could not fail to be recognized. Now, one means of gaining recognition was, in his opinion, to bring his name as speedily as possible before the eyes of the authorities, and in any manner whatever.

This simple circumstance gave Roger fresh courage. So little it takes to buoy up the hopes of even those who should despair!

He waited, then, with more patience than he would have done but for this incident, and his wound progressed favorably. At the end of eight days Roger sat up, and at the end of fifteen he began to be able to walk unaided about his room. In the meantime, the governor had visited him three times, and, on each occasion, Roger had asked the governor if he were quite sure that his declaration had come to the eyes of the minister of police. At his first inquiry, and at the second, the governor had replied that he hoped so; but the third time, he was able to assure the prisoner that it was so, since, as a reward for the active surveillance which he had displayed on that occasion, he had just been made a chevalier of Saint Louis.

The prisoner congratulated the governor very sincerely on the favor just shown him by the king, nor did he

doubt that, following upon the inquiry that must be made regarding his own accident, he himself would soon be set at liberty. There were even moments when he thought that his release could not fail to be marked likewise by a favor from His Majesty; the king, in his opinion, was too just to allow such injustice to pass without reparation. However, it is due to Roger to say that he did not dwell upon this idea of extreme justice except in moments of optimism, which he himself regarded as somewhat exaggerated after they had vanished.

However, more than fifteen days had passed since the effort to escape which we have just chronicled, the chevalier improving more and more, when the governor one night entered his room.

"Monsieur le Chevalier d'Anguilhem," he said, in his usual tone of voice, and without Roger's being able to catch his roving glance, "rise and dress yourself."

"Rise and dress myself?" repeated Roger.

"Yes, monsieur; we are to part."

"Ah!" exclaimed Roger, "I knew indeed that, sooner or later, my innocence would be established."

The governor made no reply.

"Monsieur le gouverneur," said Roger, while hastily dressing, "trust me, if I am questioned with regard to you, I shall endeavor, as I have already done, to render justice to your excellent treatment of me."

The governor bowed without other response.

"And if either I or my friends can render you any service, I shall seize the opportunity, not only with eagerness but also with gratitude."

The governor stammered a few unintelligible words.

"But," continued Roger, "I am still too weak to go on foot. Will you have the kindness, monsieur le gouverneur, to have a carriage called?"

"There is one at the door."

"Then, many thanks, monsieur le gouverneur. I will not ask for the pleasure of seeing you again at your house, but at mine, the old Hôtel Bouzenois, Place Louis-le-Grand."

The governor again bowed without speaking; however, as the chevalier was now ready, he paid little attention to the fact, but extended his hand to the governor, and, leaning on the arm of a soldier, he took his departure.

The chevalier advanced to the door through a double line of guards; at the door, he saw in fact a carriage awaiting him, and he turned to bow to the governor a last time, but the governor had remained behind.

Roger sprang into the carriage very lightly for a wounded man, and as they were shutting the door, cried in joyful tones, —

"Place Louis-le-Grand, Hôtel Bouzenois."

It seemed to him that a burst of laughter greeted his direction, but giving it no thought, he extended his wounded leg on the seat in front of him, and leaned back in a corner of his carriage.

After a while, he observed two musketeers galloping on either side of the carriage. The excessive honor shown him by His Majesty in sending him home with an escort, began to disturb Roger.

Then, instead of descending the quay, the carriage seemed to be crossing La Cité; this was by no manner of means the route to the Place Louis-le-Grand.

Roger, therefore, approached the window and questioned the guards; but doubtless the noise of the carriage-wheels and the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the pavement prevented their hearing him, for in vain did he reiterate his questions; they won no responses.

At last, after bowling along for nearly a quarter of an hour, Roger distinguished a great isolated building. He put his head outside the window, fixed his eyes on that black mass carved out of the darkness, and, to his infinite terror, he recognized the Bastile.

What Roger had taken for a release was merely a transference; and the favor that the king had done him was to take him from For-l'Évêque to place him in the Bastile.

Under the archway, Roger was required to descend and be searched, as was usual with prisoners that were brought to the Bastile. Then he was taken over the bridge and the door of the guard-house was opened. He was to wait there until his room was ready.

Roger was so stunned that he made no movement, offered no word. They came for him at the end of a quarter of an hour. One of the musketeers that had escorted his carriage offered him his arm to lean upon. Roger let himself be led like a condemned man that is taken to the scaffold. However, in passing through a very dark corridor, he felt his guide slip a little note into his hand. He trembled.

"From the Marquis de Cretté," whispered the musketeer.

Roger was about to speak, but the musketeer at the same moment gave place to a comrade and disappeared.

The prisoner had just been searched, and consequently he had nothing to fear on that score. He put his hand into his pocket and dropped the note into it. Then he rested his hand on the shoulder of his new guide. They soon came to a staircase. Doubtless they had taken into consideration the prisoner's wound, for he was made to ascend to the second floor only. Arrived there, a door was opened, then a second, then a third, and Roger found

himself in a room where, by the light of the torches following him, he saw something like a bed. Almost immediately, the door of the cell was closed. He heard the locks and bolts of the other doors grate in turn. He was again a prisoner.

As he was very tired and his leg was giving him great pain, he took his bearings for the purpose of finding his bed, and turned in the direction in which he supposed it must be. He found it in fact; but just as he was sitting down upon it, a voice said, —

“Monsieur, may I ask what you desire?”

“Pardon, monsieur,” cried Roger, rising, “I did not know that the bed was occupied.”

“It is, monsieur, as you perceive,” returned the voice; “and as mine is the right of priority, allow me to keep it.”

“Why, that is very proper, monsieur,” replied Roger; “but since, in your capacity of pioneer, you doubtless know the premises better than I, kindly tell me whether there is a chair, a bench, a stool, a seat of any kind, in short, on which I can sit. I am wounded in the thigh, and I feel that if I am kept standing any longer I may faint away.”

“Search around, monsieur,” answered the voice; “there ought to be an arm-chair somewhere.”

Roger searched about, with his hands outstretched like a man playing blind-man’s buff, and he at last came in contact with the arm-chair.

He sank into it and began to reflect.

In the first place, at the sound of that voice, it seemed to him that he had heard it somewhere, but he could not tell where. In vain he sought to apply it to some one of his acquaintances. His mind became more and more confused. Then he thought that a better way to con-

duct his research would be frankly to ask his fellow-prisoner who he was.

"Monsieur," said Roger, "when people are destined, as I fear we are, to live for some time in the same room, the best thing to do is promptly to form acquaintance, that we may know whom we have the honor to address."

"But who are you yourself?" said the voice.

"I am Roger Tancrede d'Anguilhem, — a prisoner by mistake," said Roger; "and you are right, it is quite proper that I should give my name first. And now, who are you?"

"I, monsieur, am number 158."

"What does that mean, — number 158?"

"It is the designation that has taken the place of my name and title. To-morrow, you will no longer be called the Chevalier d'Anguilhem; you will be number 159, or 160, or 161."

Roger groaned at the thought that, having lost his liberty, he was about to lose his name, and, having been a man, he was to become a number.

"Have you been here long enough to forget your other name?"

"No; but I might be punished, perhaps, if I remembered it," said the voice.

"*Diable!* you are cautious!" exclaimed Roger.

"When you have been, like me, ten years, three months, and five days under lock and key," returned the voice, "it is, I promise you, a virtue that you yourself will practise."

"Ten years!" cried Roger, "ten years, three months, and five days! I would ten times rather dash my brains out against these walls."

"Monsieur," said the voice, "you will not take it amiss if I no longer answer you."



"And why not, pray?"

"Because our great king, Louis XIV., whom God preserve, is indeed our master, to call us by what name and number he pleases, and to keep us in his château as long as it suits him."

"Oh, to be sure, I know you," cried Roger; "your very caution has betrayed you—you are the Comte d'Olibarus!"

"I am not the Comte d'Olibarus," cried the voice; "I am number 158."

Just then, steps were heard in the corridor.

"Ah! you have undone me!" cried the poor count, "and this is the second time. The first time, you spoke to me on the terrace of For-l'Évêque, and as it was found that you meant to escape, I was believed to be your accomplice and was brought here. You have just spoken to me the second time, and I shall be placed in some dungeon, which I shall never leave."

The outer door was heard to open.

"But, monsieur le comte—" began Roger.

"Silence! monsieur, in heaven's name, silence! Keep still, not a word; I do not know you; I have never spoken to you; I have never seen you."

And Comte d'Olibarus muffled himself up in his blankets, and turned his nose to the wall.

The poor prisoner was mistaken in his gloomy forebodings; they were coming merely to set up a cot for his cell-mate.

This attention gave great satisfaction to Roger, who would momentarily have been reconciled to his situation, had he been able to read Cretté's note, which he kept fingering in his pocket; but the wardens turned their backs not a moment during the time while the bed was being made, which, for that matter, did not

take long, and when they went away, they carried the candle.

Roger thought himself rid of their presence, when one of them returned and, opening the door, said, —

“By the way, the last comer is number 169.”

“*Peste!*” ejaculated Roger to himself, “it seems that between the Comte d’Olibarus and me, His Majesty has received ten lodgers.”

And he went to bed with the comforting reflection that if the Bastille filled up in that ratio, they would soon be obliged to put the earliest out of doors, or make eight or ten prisoners sleep in the same room, which, in the first instance, would meet with his entire approval, or, in the second, would at least afford him some diversion.

Upon which, he fell asleep, holding fast in his hand Cretté’s note, which he assured himself he would read by the first ray of daylight that penetrated his prison.

But man is no more sure of himself in misfortune than in good fortune. Roger slept as well as if he had been perfectly happy, and he did not awake until broad day. At first it was with great difficulty that he recalled where he was. The sight of Comte d’Olibarus sitting on his bed and sewing the tassel on his nightcap, bewildered him quite; but, after gazing around him, and delving in the depths of his memory, Roger soon remembered that he was in the Bastille.

Then all the details of his removal recurred to his mind, and he remembered that a musketeer had given him a note from Cretté which he had not been able to read the night before, and that he had gone to sleep with the note in his hand, promising himself to read it at the first peep of day.

Roger shuddered at the idea of losing this note; he

immediately began a search, and he found it, fortunately, under his bolster.

Cretté's note contained these few lines:—

"I know that you are being transferred from For-l'Évêque to the Bastille, and through the agency of Clos-Renaud, who is a lieutenant of the Gray Musketeers, I am sending you this note. Your wife has not yet reappeared, and, should it drive you to despair, I shall say that I do not think her a stranger to your detention. Royancourt is in greater favor than ever, and by the way in which I am answered when I ask for your release, I am convinced that the blow comes from that source. Moreover, they pretend to have found at your house, written in your hand, some song or other against La Maintenon; one of those, probably, that you sang to us at Saint Germain. You see indeed that only your wife could have been guilty of this petty treason.

"We can accomplish nothing therefore toward your release; but try to escape, and hasten to my house. Two or three disguises will be ready; you can travel night and day, and, in twenty-four hours you will be in a foreign country."

This letter came like a thunder-clap to Roger. He really believed his wife guilty, he even suspected that Sylvandire had betrayed him; but that she could have been equal to having him imprisoned in For-l'Évêque, was a thing that could never have entered his mind. He was forced to believe it, however; his arrest must have created some stir; it was impossible that Sylvandire could be ignorant of it, and if she was not ignorant of it, and was not a party to the affair, how did it happen that she was not in Paris soliciting his freedom? Why had she not already mustered into service all the friends of Maître Bouteau and of Monsieur de Royancourt? Why had she not sought and obtained what is very rarely refused a woman, an interview with her husband, even though it

were in the presence of witnesses? He was indeed forced to believe what Cretté said. Besides, Cretté had not been wrong when he had predicted the future; all the more reason, therefore, that he should be right in what related to the past.

Roger tore Cretté's note into impalpable bits and threw them into the fireplace; for, in the Bastille, from the second floor up, the rooms had fireplaces. Then he rose, planning, for his part, the most terrible schemes of vengeance against the Marquis de Royancourt and Sylvandire.

But to achieve revenge he must be free, and Cretté said that he must rely only on himself for that, convinced that any measures of his would be futile. Roger then set about inventing some new way of escape. He had come so very near escaping from For-l'Évêque that, after all, he did not see why he should not get out of the Bastille.

Only, there was one great obstacle to any attempt at flight. It was the presence of the Comte d'Olibarus.

Roger meditated on his project for several days; but he meditated in vain; he hit upon nothing. During all this time, his companion showed himself more and more prudent, avoiding all conversation and replying to Roger only when the latter addressed him by his number.

Three weeks rolled away, Roger meanwhile spending his days in plotting escape and cursing the cowardice of his room-mate who, the moment the subject was broached, would threaten to call the watch. Many times was he seized with a fierce desire to strangle the count and declare that he had died of a fit of apoplexy; but, fortunately, Roger always stayed his hand in good season, reserving this extreme measure for a last expedient.

We have avowed that in spite of his preoccupation Roger slept well. Roger was scarcely twenty-one years old, and a man sleeps well at that age. Yet, occasionally, in the midst of his slumbers, strange sounds reached his ears, which he took for a phase of his dreams.

As for the count, he appeared to be still more addicted to sleep than Roger, for almost invariably, when Roger awoke, the count was still asleep.

However, one night when Roger had gone to bed revolving a new scheme in his brain, and was lying motionless with the bed-covers up to his ears, and reflecting upon all the chances, good and bad, of this new scheme, it seemed to him that the singular noise which he had more than once vaguely heard in his sleep was beginning again. He at once listened most intently, and recognized the sound as that of a muffled file proceeding from the window under which the Comte d'Olibarus had his bed. Then, without interrupting his breathing, to which, on the contrary, he applied himself, giving it all the regularity and the depth of sleep, he half-opened his eyes and directed their gaze toward the window, which, in spite of the darkness of the night, spread around it at least a faint diffusion of light. At first Roger could distinguish nothing; but by degrees his sight became accustomed to the gloom, and he then discovered the Comte d'Olibarus kneeling on his bed and filing at the bars of the window.

If ever a man was astonished, certainly Roger was. Hence he lay for a time with bated breath. The count, no longer hearing the sound of his breathing, paused at once. Roger saw that he was being watched. He made one or two movements in bed, yawned, stretched, muttered a few incoherent words like a man in a dream,

and seemed to fall asleep again. The count remained some time on his guard. Then, when Roger's breathing, calm and regular, was re-established, he resumed his task.

There was not a doubt of it. The Comte d'Olibarus, so fearful, so timid, so cautious, was himself planning to escape.

Roger promised himself to take a hand in it.

Four o'clock in the morning sounded. As in all probability the event would not come off that night, Roger went to sleep again.

On waking, Roger found the count as serene as usual. He then tried to engage him in conversation; but he succeeded no better than on other days. The count even complained aloud of the ill-luck that pursued him, of continually having thrown in his path a man so compromising as Roger.

Underlying all these complaints was such an accent of genuineness that Roger, looking first at the bars and then at the count, began to believe that he had been dreaming.

The day passed without Roger's succeeding, even by word or look or gesture, in surprising the count's secret. Then came night, for which Roger was impatiently waiting.

This time Roger did not go to sleep, but he made a pretence of doing so. Nevertheless the count lay still in bed for more than two hours, regulating his breathing by Roger's. Convinced at last that his companion slept, he rose on his knees and began again his work of the night before, and in all probability of preceding nights. Roger let him work in the greatest tranquillity.

About two o'clock the count broke off, and, rising in his bare feet, he advanced toward the fireplace. Then

he drew up the stool, and, standing on it, he spoke in a low voice, although not so low but that Roger could hear these words, —

“To-morrow everything will be ready.”

A voice then said a few words in reply; but the words reached Roger’s ears only as empty sound from which he could gather no meaning. However, the count replied, —

“Yes, to-morrow.”

Then he listened. The same voice hummed again in the chimney, and he replied, —

“Agreed, at two o’clock.”

And he very carefully returned the stool to its place, went back to his bed, lay down, and apparently went to sleep.

As for Roger, now knowing what to expect, he went to sleep in earnest.

The next day passed, like the day before, without the count’s betraying by any nervousness, any flush, or any sign of impatience the plan fixed for the following night. He was the same man, so silent, so apprehensive, so timid, that Roger, who, as we have seen, was himself rather self-contained, stood in admiration before this master of dissimulation whom chance had sent him, and who so far surpassed him.

Night came. The two prisoners prepared for bed. Roger merely pretended to undress, and lay down with his clothes on.

Without doubt the count, on his part, did likewise. Soon both were snoring at a great rate, though neither the one nor the other was asleep.

Toward midnight the count rose in bed and began to saw the last bar. He worked an hour nearly. Then he got up, went to the fireplace, mounted the stool, and said, —

"Everything is ready."

The voice replied with a few words that Roger still could not understand, but which seemed to be in perfect harmony with the wishes of the count, for he contented himself with replying, —

"Good ! very good."

Then the count got down off his stool and cast himself upon his bed.

Half an hour went by.

Then the count arose, went to the door and listened, and, after assuring himself that the deepest quiet reigned throughout the interior of the prison, he stood a moment like one in a dream. Then, with a slow step, the sound of which his room-mate could scarcely detect, he drew near Roger's bed.

For a moment Roger had an idea that the count was coming to assassinate him, and thus make sure of his silence. He lay on guard then, certain, although he was defenceless, of easily getting the better of an old man who would have for a weapon merely a stiletto, a knife, or a poniard. He therefore held himself in readiness to grasp his arm the moment it should be lifted above him.

But the count did not raise his arm. He extended it merely, and touched him on the shoulder.

Instantly Roger was on his feet before the count, who recoiled a step.

"Silence !" said the count.

"The more willingly as I know all, my dear count," returned Roger.

"How so ?"

"For three nights I have not slept, nor have I lost, I will not say sight, but hearing, of you."

"Then you guess what I am about ?"



"Perfectly, and I am ready."

"Dress yourself."

"I am dressed."

"Capital!"

"You perceive that you did me injustice in not trusting me."

"You are so young!"

"Yes, but I have courage and determination."

"I know it, and that is why I had resolved to notify you when you would need only those two virtues. The time is at hand; get ready."

"I am ready! What are we to do?"

"As you are aware, I have succeeded in communicating with two prisoners in the room above us. One of the two is a friend of mine, and we were on the point of escaping together from For-l'Évêque, when your own flight caused us to be sent to the Bastille. Happily, we have been separated only by one floor, and have succeeded in communicating with each other through the aperture of the chimney. We have a file. Each of us has sawed the bars of his window. Our two neighbors will let down to us a rope that they have made with their own sheets and blankets, to which we will add our sheets and blankets. They will then pull up the rope, attach it to one of the unsawed bars, and, as the two windows are directly one above the other, we shall descend, they from their window, we from ours."

"Capital!"

"Then it suits you?"

"Perfectly. Yet, my dear count, now that we are to flee together, come, tell me frankly, why are you in the Bastille?"

"Do you wish to know?"

"Yes, truly it would give me great satisfaction," said Roger. "By yours I can rate my own offence. You have been a prisoner ten years. I shall know about how long the king was counting upon retaining me as a boarder."

"Well, I had the imprudence to say —"

"You had the imprudence to say?" repeated Roger.

"That the king —" continued the count, lowering his voice.

"Well, that the king?"

"Was getting so blind that —"

"That —"

"That he saw only through Madame de Maintenon's spectacles."

"What!" cried Roger. "Ten years for that?"

"Hush, pray!"

"You have been in prison ten years for that?"

"Ten years, three months, and five days."

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* Well, in that case, I am in for life."

"What have you done?"

"I? I composed one or two songs about her."

"And it is known?"

"It seems that my wife has parted with the originals."

"In your handwriting?"

"In my handwriting."

"Then, my dear friend, you are very fortunate to have found a chance to escape, for, as you have just remarked, you were in for life."

"Or for theirs," returned Roger.

"Which may still be a very long time," replied the count. "Egotists live a hundred and fifty years, like parrots; but hush, here is our rope coming down."

Thereupon the count approached the chimney, in

which the end of a sheet was hanging. The two prisoners then set to work to join their sheets and blankets, end for end, with the one that had been lowered. Then, the operation finished, the prisoners in the upper story drew up the whole.

The count then approached the window, and, with Roger's help, wrenched away the two bars which were now held in place only by a bit of iron, and which, on being broken out, left a space wide enough for a man to pass through.

It was agreed that the count should go first and Roger next.

Both got up on the bed, holding themselves in readiness.

They heard the sound of the rope lightly touching as it descended.

Then they could distinguish an opaque body. It was one of the prisoners from the upper story. He reached the ground without accident and waited.

The second passed in his turn, and he also stood in safety beside the first.

Then it was the turn of the count, who reached the ground with the same good fortune. Then, last of all, went Roger, and he joined his companions.

Twenty steps away there was a sentinel who kept pacing back and forth, sometimes turning his back upon the fugitives, sometimes coming toward them.

There was no way of escape except by going within ten steps of him. They must leap from the rampart into the foss, swim the foss, scale the opposite slope, let themselves down from there on some low-roofed house of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, and escape by way of the mansards or the gutters. There were twenty chances of breaking their necks.

It was nevertheless agreed that, just as the sentinel was about to turn, the four fugitives should make a dash, every man for himself.

So said, so done. The soldier went the length of his beat; then he turned.

At the same instant the four fugitives ran straight for the ditch.

Roger heard the sentinel's challenge, "Who goes there?" saw a long flash followed by a report, felt one of his comrades roll between his legs, and became conscious at the same time, by a sensation as from the violent lash of a whip, that he was struck in the side; but he plunged into the ditch, nevertheless, and began to swim for the opposite bank. Meanwhile a great hue and cry arose from the Bastille. Windows became alight, torches began to move rapidly about, and the soldiers shouted: "To arms! to arms!"

Roger kept on swimming. The water prevented his feeling pain. Hence he reached the bank thinking himself but slightly wounded; but he had barely set foot upon the ground before he felt that his strength was failing.

He summoned, therefore all his courage, and, aiding himself with his hands, continued to toil up the grassy slope; but it seemed to him that the sky had turned the color of blood. A ringing noise like that of a bell sounded in his ears. He tried to speak, to call mechanically for help, and his voice died in his throat. Then he raised himself again, beating the air with his hands, made a last effort, in which his remaining faculties were exhausted, and fell back fainting.

His two remaining comrades continued their flight. As we have said, it had been agreed that each man should think only of himself.

## XXIII.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WENT FROM THE BASTILE TO THE CHÂTEAU DE CHALON-SUR-SAÔNE, AND MADE THE JOURNEY IN COMPANY WITH AN OFFICER OF VERY SPRIGHTLY CHARACTER.

THE Comte d'Olibarus was killed, and Roger was dangerously wounded. The count was buried as Number 158, and Roger was returned to the Bastile.

But Roger was a Hercules. In three weeks' time he was on his feet again, still weak, but quite out of danger. What is more, his two accidents had sobered him very much with regard to attempts at escape, and he was, for the time being at least, almost cured of his mania for flight.

But, what he was not cured of, what he promised himself never to be cured of, was hatred of Sylvandire, to whom, according to what Cretté had told him, he owed, first, his incarceration, and next the two wounds that had resulted from it. True, in ridding herself of Roger by means of For-l'Évêque and the Bastile, means so commonly resorted to in those days, Sylvandire could not foresee that he would have the bad taste to attempt to escape, and that those two attempts would end so unfortunately for him; but it was not the less true that the cause of it all was Sylvandire.

Hence the chevalier promised himself, once free, to visit upon her a cruel vengeance. But what should that vengeance be? Roger had no idea as yet. He knew only that some day he would be revenged.

One evening, after he had all day given himself up to these soothing reflections, he heard steps in his corridor. As it was at an unusual hour, and as, after four or five months of prison life, he was beginning to know the ways of such establishments, he was convinced that a new turn was to be given to his affairs. In fact, two soldiers entered and stationed themselves at either side of his door. The governor followed them, and after saluting Roger, he invited the latter to gather up his belongings in the room and follow him. The inventory was not long. One of the turnkeys shouldered the little bundle, and Roger obeyed the governor.

They traversed the corridor that opened upon the inner court, then the court itself, then the archway, all between a double line of guards. Then, on the other side, they found a carriage. Another transfer was on foot.

Roger, who was beginning to be skeptical as to the memory of His Majesty, Louis XIV., did not deceive himself this time. Besides, there was a mounted musketeer at either door of the carriage and an officer was sitting inside. The prisoner then saluted the governor, thanking him for the care bestowed on his wound, and took his place beside the officer. Instantly the door was locked, and the vehicle set off at full speed.

Part of Paris was crossed without Roger's being able to see in what direction the carriage was taking him. It was the kind of night that is usually chosen for the transfer of prisoners. However, by the fresher and purer atmosphere, he soon felt that they were outside of the capital. He leaned toward the window, from which he could make out trees and fields; but as he appeared very much absorbed in the sight, the officer remarked, —

"I warn you, monsieur, that the coach is locked, that two musketeers are galloping beside us, that I have a pistol in each pocket, and that my orders are to fire on you at the slightest effort on your part to escape. You see, I tell you this," the officer continued, "because I am an old soldier, and I should not like to kill a gentleman without telling him why. Now, you have your warning. The rest is your affair."

With a sigh Roger flung himself back into the depths of the carriage. He was beginning to entertain a lively esteem for material force, which he had heretofore known only as something to combat and to vanquish.

"But, in short," said Roger, "where am I to be taken now?"

"I am forbidden to say," responded the officer. "Ah! You were recommended to me as a keen fellow that takes advantage of the slightest indiscretion."

Roger gave vent to a deep groan.

"Come, now! come, now!" continued the officer. "Use a little reason and you will not give up for that. I have conducted women who put a better face on the matter than you."

"Then you are taking me to another prison?" said Roger.

"Oh! as for that, if I were to say no, you would not believe me. So I will answer frankly, yes."

"To Pignerol or to the Îles Sainte Marguerite," murmured Roger. "Ah! Fouquet! ah! Lauzun!"

"'Sh!" exclaimed the officer. "'Sh! Don't spoil matters by talking to me of all those great men. Let us go along quietly now, and not meddle with politics. Come, I am a good-hearted fellow myself, and it is very fortunate that you did not fall into the hands of some of my confrères, so surly and uncivil that they

would not have said a word to you the whole way. I, on the contrary, like a man to be a gentleman. I detest not talking, and I consider it much better to make the poor prisoners laugh than to make them cry, being at quits afterwards to show them teeth and claws if they are ungrateful for my consideration; but I must say that has never happened to me. Come, be a good fellow like the rest, and I promise you the journey shall not seem long."

"Ah!" said Roger, with a shudder. "That is it; we are going to the other side of France. Ah! Mattioli! oh! the Iron Mask!"

"Again, again!" resumed the officer. "Oh! i' faith, my gentleman, you promise me a very disagreeable journey, while I would like nothing better, for my part, than to make the trip a cheerful one. Come, rouse up, put a good face on it. I do not mean literally, as your face is not to be seen, — although I can guess that you are making a wry mouth, — and I will talk to you, although I am expressly forbidden to do so."

"And what will you talk about?" asked Roger.

"Ah! *dame!* of matters and things, of rain or shine. Anything is better than sulking like a pike."

"But there is only one thing that I wish to know. There is but one point on which I wish to be enlightened."

"Well, speak out, what is it?"

"Where are we going?"

"I am forbidden to tell you."

"Ah! you see, indeed."

"Yes; but I am not forbidden to tell you where we are not going."

"Oh! tell me, then."

"First of all, let us settle some trifling conditions.



Promise that you will not try to escape, and that you will not be sad any longer. Ah! look here, sadness is the death of me!"

"But will you, in return," said Roger, "give me your word as an old soldier that you will deliver a message with which I may charge you?"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"You might offer me one hundred crowns and I would promise you nothing. Why, think of it, my dear monsieur, your demand is absurd. Come! And why should the king have you under guard if not to keep you from sending messages? Now, pray be sensible!"

Roger reflected that he would gain nothing from his comrade's ill-will, while he might, on the other hand, lose a great deal by it. Escape seemed impossible. Besides, as we have said, he was for the time being cured of that monomania. So, after a moment's silence, he said to his fellow-traveller, —

"Well, monsieur, I pledge you my word as a gentleman that I will make no attempt at escape, and that I will be as gay as I can."

"Well said! Now we are growing reasonable, and we shall have a charming little trip. Come, come, ask the questions and you shall be answered."

"Are we going to the Îles Sainte Marguerite?"

"No."

"To the Tour Saint-Jean?"

"No."

"To Pierre-en-Scise?"

"You are warm."

"To the fortress of Dijon?"

"You burn; you burn."

"Then we are going to the Château de Châlon?"

Silence, absolute and prolonged.

"But, answer me now!" cried Roger, impatiently.

"That was not our agreement, my dear monsieur," protested the officer. "I promised to tell you where you are not going, but I am forbidden to tell you where you are going. Suppose that I am compromised by my kindness to you, and that I am compelled to swear that I did not tell you that you were going to the Château de Châlon. In that case, I lift my hand, and give my oath conscientiously, for I have not told you."

"Indeed! Then we are on our way to the Château de Châlon," murmured Roger with a sigh, as he fell back, silent and thoughtful, into the corner of the carriage.

"Come, come!" said the officer. "Here we are, given over to melancholy. We are to have a lively journey, it appears, and two days of it! Ah! I warn you, in the start, that I will not put up with it."

"What!" said Roger, "you will force me to be gay?"

"I have your word, monsieur, and, as a man of honor, you will take pity on a poor officer and live up to it. Why, think of it, I was not born to be an officer; not I. I was meant for a ballad-singer at Turlupin's. Hah! speaking of songs, excellent! I am glad I thought of that. It may cheer you up. Ah! you have composed some droll songs, my dear monsieur!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Roger.

"Good! you are not going to deny it? They were found at your house, and in your handwriting."

"I have no idea of what you mean."

"I see, I see. I am not trying to extract an acknowl-

edgment; but you are of a satirical turn, my dear monsieur."

And the exempt began to sing, to the tune of a popular air: —

"On dit que c'est la Maintenon  
Qui renverse le trône,  
Et que cette vieille guenon  
Nous réduit à l'aumône.  
Louis le Grand soutient que non,  
La faridondaine, la faridondon,  
Et que tout se règle par lui,  
Biribi,  
A la façon de Barbari,  
Mon ami."

[ "They say that 't is la Maintenon  
Doth cause the throne's downfall,  
And that that same old harridan  
Doth make us beggars all.  
But it is not so, says Louis the Great,  
La faridondaine, la faridondon,  
And I the trouble will regulate,  
Biribi,  
As they do it in Barbary,  
My boy." ]

"I was not the author of it!" cried Roger. "I had the misfortune to copy it, that is all."

"And this one?" said the officer.

And he sang again to another tune: —

"Tout ce que fait la Maintenon,  
Ne saurait jamais être bon.  
Cette vieille sempiternelle,  
A donné la guerre au Voisin,  
Et je crois que Polichinelle  
Aura les finances demain."

[“ Whatever la Maintenon does, my son,  
Is never done as it should be done.  
That sempiternal old baboon  
Made Voisin Minister of War,  
And Master Punch himself eftsoon  
Will have the Treasury, I swear.”]

“ But I tell you,” rejoined Roger, “ that I did not  
compose that song either.”

“ Good! and this one ? ”

The officer resumed, to a different tune : —

“ Ah ! ah ! ah ! Maintenon,  
Margoton,  
Dit le bon roi,  
Laisse-moi,  
Car c'est toi  
Qui me feras rire  
Dans la poêle à frire.”

[“ Ah ! ah ! ah ! Maintenon,  
Margoton,  
The king, says he,  
Don't nag at me,  
For can't you see  
If you have your way  
There's the devil to pay ! ”]

“ But,” cried Roger, “ how does it happen that you  
can sing those songs without being arrested ? ”

“ I am singing them to you, dear monsieur, and to  
no one else. *Peste !* It would never enter my head  
to sing them in public nor to copy them in my own  
hand. Not that I do not find them very droll, and to  
prove it, as you see, I have not changed a word, heh ?  
Am I wrong ? Come, now, if I have made a mistake,  
do you, as the author, point it out.”

"On my honor," replied Roger. "I protest —"

"Hush! No more! Certainly, I will pretend to believe you. Well, no! It was not you. Come, we will say no more about it."

"Oh! luckless wretch that I am!" cried Roger. "Oh! how imprudent I was to sing such things!"

"On the contrary, they must be sung. There is no harm in it; but they must be sung in private, while tête-à-tête, as we are. But copies of them should not be kept at home, and especially copies in one's own handwriting, or, i' faith! a man is liable, if his wife needs to get rid of him. Ah! *dame!* She is so easy to tempt, woman!"

"What!" exclaimed Roger, "do you know of my misfortune, too?"

"What misfortune?"

"Why, in short, what you were just speaking of."

"I! I know nothing," said the officer. "I spoke of that as I might have spoken of anything else."

Then he began humming, —

"On dit que c'est la Maintenon  
Qui renverse la trône."

As for Roger, quite overcome by his singular position, and beginning to fear lest his mind should give way in the conflict of ideas besieging him, he closed his eyes, and, resting his head against the side of the carriage, he endeavored to recover somewhat his clearness of mind, while the officer, passing from one song to another, continued to hum the seditious stanzas for which he seemed to entertain especial admiration. However, as Roger had not slept for three nights, in the end he succumbed to sleep, nor did he awake until broad daylight the next morning. He found beside

him, still fresh, alert and smiling, the officer, who inquired with the liveliest interest as to how he had passed the night. As for himself, he asserted that, relying on his prisoner's word, he had enjoyed all the delights of slumber.

Just as they were leaving the carriage for breakfast, he asked Roger if he had any money. Roger was without a sou. They had taken away everything that he possessed, even his jewels, through fear that he might use them to bribe his keepers. The prisoner therefore made humble confession of his poverty.

Thereupon a certain conflict between a good and a bad impulse appeared to be taking place in the officer's mind. But the good impulse won the day.

"Listen, I could keep fifteen sous of the two ~~livres~~ <sup>livres</sup> allowed by the king for your meal; but you have been very amiable, you have kept your word. Instead of being extortionate, as certain of my confrères would be, I will give up some of it, and, with your permission, if my company is not too disagreeable, why, we will breakfast together."

"With great pleasure," replied Roger, who, in such matters had never possessed very exaggeratedly aristocratic ideas, and who, moreover, did not care to fall out with his companion.

And they both sat down to the table. As the officer had hoped, the meal was really good. Roger ate like a convalescent twenty years of age.

"What a fine time of life is yours!" remarked the officer, regarding him with envy, notwithstanding that, for his own part, he had come off with some distinction. "What a delightful appetite! Yet I was the same at your age. But I was much gayer, always singing, singing at the top of my voice, with mouth

stretched from morning till night, singing like a lark, like a goldfinch, like a nightingale, but always careful to sing other people's songs, and never my own, unless I was alone with a friend like you. For I used to make songs, too; not so good as yours, perhaps, but they had their merit nevertheless. Listen, now, here is one of them."

And the officer began to sing to an air from "The Chimes:" —

"Tonton, ton temps est passé,  
Vieille coquette !  
Tonton, ton timbre est cassé,  
Vieille pendule ! tu répètes,  
A soixante ans,  
Le carillon de la clochette  
Dans son printemps.  
Mais, à présent,  
Ton tocsin tintant  
Ne réveille personne,  
Quand sur le tendre ton  
Ta grosse cloche sonne,  
Non, non, non,  
Si l'on t'entend,  
Ce n'est qu'au son  
De ton argent comptant."

["Tonton, past is thy time,  
Old coquette !  
Tonton, cracked is thy chime,  
Old clock ! that dost repeat,  
Though past thy prime,  
The carillon so sweet  
That joy-bells sing  
In their spring.  
But now, old crone,  
Thy wheezy ting-a-ling

Will serve to waken none,  
When in its tenderest tone  
Thy hoarse old bell doth groan.  
Ding, dong, ding,  
Whoever is listening,  
He listens to the ring  
Of thy good hard cash alone.”]

“Hey? what do you say to that, my cavalier?” demanded the officer, when he had ended and had allowed Roger a moment’s silence in which to appraise his verse.

“Why, I say,” replied Roger, “that you are very imprudent to sing such things.”

“Why so?”

“What if I were to denounce you?”

“Bah! who would believe you? I should say that you wanted to take revenge for my strictness, and it would all recoil on you.”

During the night they arrived at the Château de Châlon-sur-Saône.

Roger was conducted forthwith to the room assigned to him; but, as he was very tired from the journey, and very much weakened by his recent wound, which was not yet healed, he cast himself on his bed without even looking to see what his room was like.

He remarked merely that it was lighted by a lamp hanging from the ceiling, and this attention pleased him.



## XXIV.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM BECOMES AS WISE AND AS WARY AS HAD BEEN THE LATE COMTE D'OLIBARUS.

WHEN Roger first awoke, he saw the lamp still burning. Thereupon, thinking that it was not yet day, he turned his face to the wall and again fell asleep.

But the next time that he awoke, he wondered at the delay of sunrise, and gazed about him. Then the terrible truth dawned upon him. He was in a cell without windows. The lamp, whose light he had hailed as a blessing, was henceforth his only sun. A revolving dumb-waiter, designed to serve his meals, contained the breakfast, — proof positive that the day was already advanced.

Ah, then! Brave as Roger was, his misfortunes bore heavily upon his soul and rent his breast. He sat down on his bed, his arms listless, asking himself what he had done to God or man to be thus abandoned by the one and maltreated by the other.

He sat thus in the deepest dejection for a period whose duration he was incapable of reckoning. Only his dumb-waiter moved, turned, and came back laden with his dinner in place of the breakfast that had returned as intact as it had come.

Yet, in the midst of this profound grief by which Roger was crushed, nature, ever exacting, claimed her rights. Roger was hungry. Roger was thirsty. Me-

chanically approaching the dummy, he ate and drank as a thirsty, starving animal would have done. Then, with a slow and regular tread, he began to range the limits of his room like a wild beast in a cage.

The hours rolled on unmarked by change of daylight and darkness. The days went by without his hearing a single rumor. Roger's sole distraction was the sound made by the turning of the dumb-waiter when his meals were served, or the motion of his lamp as it disappeared through the ceiling for a supply of oil and a new wick.

But the hand that caused the dummy to creak and the lamp to ascend remained invisible. Once or twice Roger addressed the unknown agent, asking the day or the hour, not for the sake of knowing either, but simply to hear the sound of a human voice. But never did his questions win the slightest response, and the prisoner very soon ceased to repeat attempts whose futility he recognized.

At first he was beside himself with despair. Then exhaustion succeeded despair. Sometimes he slept twelve hours at a stretch. He either sprawled like a brute or sat stock-still like an idiot.

He once hoped that he was going mad; and at the thought he burst into wild shouts of laughter.

But he was not so fortunate. As a stone cast into a pool momentarily troubles the water and sends the mire to its surface, so had rage and despair filled Roger's brain at the blow received in his heart. But just as the water gradually becomes pure and pellucid, the prisoner's brain grew calm, and, after a month of this captivity, a casual glance would have led one to think him subdued and almost resigned.

The truth was, the bitterness which had at first

rankled in his mind had gradually been precipitated, and it filled his heart.

Then the appearance of resignation came upon him. He looked as if he lived like any one else. His mind grew active with repose of body, his ideas were reorganized. By dint of studying his situation he caught glimpses of a thousand confused possibilities of which, when outside, at liberty and among people, his mind, diverted by exterior objects, would never have permitted him to suspect even the existence.

He went back over his life day by day, hour by hour, almost minute by minute, from the day on which he became Sylvandire's husband to the hour of his arrest at Cours-la-Reine. He reviewed the brief love that Sylvandire had seemed to entertain for him, but which was merely the physical attraction that a woman feels for the first man that has caused her to experience unknown sensations. He saw that false love gradually disappear and make way for indifference. Then he recognized the springing up of the first symptoms of the dislike to which Sylvandire had since sacrificed him. These symptoms had followed close upon Monsieur de Royancourt's appearance at the Hôtel d'Anguilhem. This dislike was very soon reenforced by that which Sylvandire conceived for her husband's intimates. From that time strife was established between those two natures so dissimilar. Both had summoned their natural allies. Roger had called in Cretté, d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, and hosts of true-hearted gentlemen, who had at first counselled an open and aggressive war, and later a wise retreat. Sylvandire had called to her aid the Marquis de Royancourt, Monsieur Bouteau, without doubt, and the Jesuit, Letellier. Probably they had resorted to tortuous measures, to underhanded sub-

terfuges, to evil machinations, and they had succeeded. Roger was now in their toils, bound hand and foot, held under an accusation that had nothing to do with the real cause of his arrest. His imprisonment would last as long as Monsieur de Royancourt's passion, love, or fancy endured for Sylvandire, and perhaps longer; for, to their dread of the wronged husband's accusation would be added fear of the injured prisoner's vengeance. His detention, then, might be indefinitely prolonged, either because the love with which Sylvandire inspired the marquis might defy time, or because the fear with which Roger inspired Monsieur de Royancourt might prove stronger than remorse.

Then, too, Roger analyzed his own conduct with the same attention to details that he had just exercised in the analysis of that of others, and he discovered a thousand ways, under the same conditions, of avoiding all the misfortunes that had befallen him.

"Yes," said Roger to himself, "yes, I have been nothing but a fool. I should have done as do so many husbands that I know who are happy and respected, and are at this moment walking up and down the streets of Paris in the full enjoyment of their liberty. I should have shut my eyes, and taken up with Mademoiselle Poussette, as Cretté advised me. Decidedly, the others were all men of sense. As for me, I am a fool.

"Instead of being a poor prisoner as I now am, I should be the colonel of a regiment. I should have to mortify the flesh three days in the week, it is true. But on other days, in some very elegant, commodious, retired little house of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, I should be living on the fat of the land with mistress and friends. The king would bestow on me his blandest smile. I should kiss the dry hand of Madame de

Maintenon once a week. I should pay court to Père Letellier. I might hold a duke's patent, be a peer of France, perhaps.

"Ah! really I am a fool.

"But, no! no! a hundred times no! I did what I should have done. I did what I would do again. Honor is everything in this world, and there is but one way of looking at it. Besides, I loved that woman, not with my heart, — my heart has always belonged to poor Constance, — but I loved her with pride. I loved her because she was beautiful, perhaps also because I have done much for her, perhaps because she owed everything to me. But however that may be, I loved her, in short. I should not, I could not, have allowed her to be taken from me. I did therefore just as I should have done, and not I am the fool. The fools are they who are branded with infamy.

"But, let me be free for one day and I will avenge myself! Ah! when will that be?"

That was the question.

At For-l'Évêque Roger had told himself that if his liberty were restored to him he would pardon all. At the Bastille he had made a few mental reservations. At Châlon he told himself that he was twenty-two years old, and the king was seventy-five. That, granting the king ten years to live, that is, until he was eighty-five, it was all that a crowned head, however exacting, could demand. Then, the king being dead, the prisons would be thrown open. At the very worst, therefore, Roger would leave prison at thirty-two.

Now Roger asked himself which he would prefer, to leave prison at that very moment and have no revenge, or to leave in ten years and take his revenge quite at his ease.

Roger answered that he would prefer to leave prison in ten years and avenge himself like an able-bodied man.

So at the end of three months of isolation and seclusion, Roger had become a deep thinker, a consummate politician, a Machiavelli of the first rank.

At times, could a person have looked in upon him, he would have been seen sitting on his stool with his legs crossed, his elbow on his knee, his chin in his hand, his gaze fixed, and a smile on his lips. Such a person might then have supposed that Roger was dreaming of his father, his mother, Mademoiselle de Beuzerie, the beautiful days of his youth, or of some pleasant memory.

No, Roger was dreaming of vengeance.

Eleven months thus rolled away, the prisoner's heart never despairing, his courage never failing him. His sunburnt face may have whitened somewhat during this long night; his Herculean outlines were reduced by fasting; but the pallor lent him an air that he had lacked, and the falling-off gave him an elegance that one had vainly sought in him. Roger remained strong and handsome; but Roger was becoming a hypocrite.

Every night he prayed aloud for the king's length of days and for Madame de Maintenon's; because, you see, eyes might be watching what he did, ears perhaps were listening to what he said. True, at the bottom of his heart and in the same breath he sent them all to the devil; but that was inwardly, and only God and himself knew anything about it.

One morning as he was gnawing at a crust of bread that was serving as his breakfast, the door of his cell opened. A voice that he recognized reached his ear. His eyes, accustomed to the darkness, — for often he

went hours, whole days, even, without any one's thinking to relight his expired lamp, — distinguished a superbly dressed gentleman, who advanced two or three steps and spoke his name.

It was Monsieur de Royancourt coming with outstretched arms to meet Roger.

Roger seized his stool and raised it with the intention of breaking Monsieur de Royancourt's head. His enemy stood before him. He had but to drop his massive arm to annihilate him. Roger reflected, flung the stool on the bed, and ran toward the Marquis de Royancourt with open arms.

Thanks to the obscurity in which he was enveloped, the threatening gesture, which in his first impulse had escaped him, passed unobserved.

These two men, who mortally hated each other, pressed heart to heart like friends, like brothers.

"You are here, then, my dear Anguilhem!" exclaimed the marquis, drawing him outside. "Ah! how long we searched without finding you!"

In spite of his presence of mind, Roger was astounded at such boldness; but he concealed his amazement beneath the smile that he had practised, accepted the hand that Monsieur de Royancourt extended to draw him from his cell, and following his lead while effusively pressing his hand, he reached a room belonging to the governor's apartment.

Passing in front of a mirror, Roger hardly knew himself. His beard was long, his hair bristling, and his clothes hung in rags.

He smiled at himself with the same smile that he had bestowed on Monsieur de Royancourt.

"You are free, my dear Monsieur d'Anguilhem," said the marquis. "But, *mon Dieu!* how does it

happen that we have had no news of you for these fifteen months? However, we will speak of all that later. Let us be off now as expeditiously as possible."

"The most expeditious way, my dear liberator, my friend, my brother," said Roger, "would be, I think, to ascertain from monsieur le gouverneur, whether I am really free, — a thing I cannot yet believe."

"You are free, my dear chevalier, thanks to our entreaties," returned the marquis.

"Believe that I am truly grateful. I should say, then, that the first thing to do would be to ascertain whether monsieur le gouverneur would kindly lend me a room, order a bath, and send for a tailor and a hairdresser."

"Of course, my dear chevalier, you shall have all that, with the exception of the tailor, who is not needed. I foresaw your destitution, and I have in my chaise some clothes that I brought from your hôtel. They shall be laid out for you; and at the same time, if you will permit, my valet shall attend you."

"You overwhelm me, my dear marquis; but I accept. It is delightful to owe everything to you."

Roger was conducted to a room, a bath was brought him, and, while he was in the bath, Monsieur de Royancourt's valet shaved him and dressed his hair.

Then, on emerging from his bath, Roger made his toilet.

Not before did he himself perceive the change that had taken place in him. The one quality formerly wanting in Roger had been refinement of mien, that distinctive mark of breeding. Fasting and perhaps reflection had lent him that refinement. Roger was now a finished cavalier.

Monsieur de Royancourt was himself astonished at



sight of him. There was a look of power in the man which he had never seen, and it made him shudder. Resolution shone in his eye. For the first time Monsieur de Royancourt thought of how much the man had to fear who had Roger for an enemy.

The governor desired to detain the gentlemen to breakfast; but Roger smilingly answered that the governor doubtless forgot that his own had been served just before Monsieur de Royancourt had entered his cell. The governor stammered a few excuses, falling back on the rigid rules of the institution which would not permit him to show his guests all the attentions that were sometimes their due. Roger thereupon replied, with his unfailing smile, that, as for himself, he could not complain, so thoroughly well treated had he been.

The chaise stood before the entrance. Post-horses were attached. Monsieur de Royancourt and Roger entered, and the carriage departed at full speed.

It was with deepest ecstasy that Roger, oppressed for eleven months by the noisome air of a cell, inhaled the pure, balmy air of the month of May. It was with inexpressible happiness that Roger beheld, instead of the gloomy boundary of four walls, the landscape with its wide plains and distant blue mountains, but all this pleasure, all this enjoyment was confined within. He was as impenetrable in his happiness as in his hatred, and he looked again upon this nature that he so loved with the same smile with which he looked at the man he so hated.

And from time to time he answered the other's questions with an affectionate glance or a friendly tone, and renewed his assurances of gratitude and devotion.

At last the conversation, marked for a time on the marquis' side by a certain embarrassment of which he

was not quite master, and on Roger's by an emotion that he had not power entirely to stifle, assumed a more even tone.

Roger summoned up all his courage, steadied his voice, and asked for news of Sylvandire.

"Alas! poor woman!" returned Monsieur de Royancourt. "You have caused her great sorrow, and you owe her great amends."

"Ah!" murmured Roger, "indeed!"

"Unquestionably," answered Monsieur de Royancourt. "At first, although you had threatened to leave her, she would not believe in your departure, and thought it only a joke. But when she saw one, two, three days go by without your return, she was indeed obliged to succumb before the evidence. Then she became almost demented. For a week there was nothing but sighs and tears. Finally, she went to Monsieur d'Argenson to find out where you were. Monsieur d'Argenson knew only that you were no longer in France. As you may suppose, at this news her despair increased, and one fine day, on presenting himself at your house, her father learned that she had set out that very morning to discover and to rejoin you wherever you might be. For three months no one knew what had become of her, poor woman! And the king, who knows everything that happens in his realm, learning of this adventure, declared that you were a bad husband, a wicked example, and ordered that you should be arrested."

"Good and excellent king!" cried the chevalier most earnestly.

"Then it was that the search was made at your house when the unfortunate verses were found which have caused all the trouble."

"And which I sincerely repent having preserved. For you do not think me capable of such ingratitude as to be the author of them, do you?"

"Oh! I have never thought so. It was in that conviction that I pleaded your cause."

"My deliverer!" cried the chevalier, grasping both hands of Monsieur de Royancourt. "But let us return to Sylvandire, I beg."

"Well, my dear friend, Sylvandire arrived in London after you. She learned that you had just set out for France. She followed you. At Dover she was a day too late; at Calais, two hours."

"Dear Sylvandire!" murmured the chevalier with the most conjugal emphasis.

"At Calais she learned of your departure for Paris, and, without losing a moment, without stopping to rest, much as she must have needed to do so, she also set out, hoping to overtake you on the way; but her hope was deceived. Not having overtaken you, she hoped to find you at the hotel, and she sat up all night without rest, because she looked for you to arrive at any moment; but you did not come. Judge of her grief!"

"Ah, marquis, marquis, you torture my soul!" cried Roger, as he wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. "What then? Continue. And I could suspect such a wife! ah, you are right, marquis; I am guilty. What next did she do? What next?"

"Well," resumed the marquis, deceived by the naturalness with which Roger played his part, "what could you expect me to tell you after that? Her days were spent in grief, in tears; for you did not appear, and we did not know what had become of you."

"You did not know that I was in prison? Well, on my word of honor, I suspected as much."

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* no, we did not know it. Monsieur d'Argenson, dreading to be solicited by Madame d'Anguilhem, or forced by me, whom he knew to have influence, Monsieur d'Argenson apprised us of your imprisonment only about a fortnight ago. And then, as you may suppose, Sylvandire took the field. Monsieur de Bouteau and I, for our parts, did likewise, and we have so begged and entreated and besought Madame de Maintenon, so encompassed the king, that we have at last obtained your pardon. Ah! my dear Anguilhem," added the marquis feelingly, "ah! how we have suffered!"

"And all that time I was accusing you of lukewarmness. Ah! wretch, ingrate that I am! You have pardoned me; but do you think that she will ever pardon me, marquis?"

"A woman's soul is a treasury of indulgence," replied the marquis. "Hope, then, my dear chevalier."

"And now that you have reassured me somewhat upon that point, a word of my parents, my dear marquis. My conjugal affection, you see, has caused me to forget filial affection. The baron and the baroness are in good health, I trust?"

"Yes, thank God! and, through your wife's forethought, they are both notified that you are about to return from a long journey; for they, like us, were ignorant of your captivity."

"Thoughtful Sylvandire! And our acquaintances, d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, Cretté?"

The last name escaped Roger carelessly rather than deliberately.

The marquis was caught by the careless manner.

"Why, as you know," he returned, "I see little of your friends, who pass at court for libertines; haunting

the Palais Royal. I believe, however, that they are well, especially Monsieur de Cretté, with whom I regret having had some differences; but, thank heaven, everything is adjusted between us."

"Ah, indeed! You have had differences on account of Madame de Maintenon? Of course it is wrong of Cretté not to admire that noble, that saintly woman. But, as you have just remarked, the man is dissolute, an associate, I believe, of Broglié, La Fare, and Canilhac."

"All lost souls!" declared Monsieur de Royancourt, clasping his hands with an air of compassion.

"Supposing them to have any," said Roger.

Monsieur de Royancourt made a sign of misgiving, and for a time there was a lull in the conversation.

Roger was delighted with himself. He had just put into practice the rules which his fifteen months of prison life had taught him. He saw that he had duped Monsieur de Royancourt, and he hoped to deceive his wife as he had deceived the marquis.

With slight variations, the remainder of the journey was abridged by conversations of the same sort. The travellers journeyed day and night, halting at Auxerre and stopping only for a moment at Fontainebleau.

At last they reached Paris.

Roger saw For-l'Évêque in the distance, and rode along the foot of the walls of the Bastille.

Ten minutes later they were at the gates of the Hôtel d'Anguilhem.

Evidently Roger was expected. The entire household had been apprised, and were drawn up to receive him. On entering the court of the hôtel, Roger saw lackeys at all the doors, and his wife at the window.

He leaped from the coach, and hastened toward the

salon. Sylvandire, followed by Monsieur Bouteau, advanced to meet him, so that he encountered her at the door.

At that moment, beyond the calmly hypocritical face of his wife, Roger caught sight of the portraits of his father and mother smiling at him from their frames. Then, seared as his heart was by fifteen months of imprisonment, the tears sprang to his eyes at sight of the only friends on whom man can rely.

His emotion was so overpowering that Roger fainted.

Sylvandire could possibly have thought, and she doubtless did think, that his love for her and his joy at seeing her again had deprived the chevalier of his senses.

## XXV.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM SET FIRE TO  
HIS HÔTEL TO FIND OUT WHETHER HE WAS OR  
WAS NOT WHAT HE FEARED.

THREE days after the scene we have just described, a spectacle patriarchal to behold was afforded by the Hôtel d'Anguilhem, thanks to Maître Bouteau's charming cordiality, to Sylvandire's extravagant caresses, to Monsieur de Royancourt's eager sympathy, and to Roger's hypocrisy.

All these people appeared to love one another according to the apostolic injunction.

Now, as we view everything in this world merely on the surface, we all allow ourselves to be deceived by it, even when self-interest requires us to sound the depths of other people's motives. Even Roger, finding himself enveloped by such tender affection whichever way he looked or turned, was occasionally conscious of doubt in his heart.

Cretté, unfortunately, had been absent from Paris about eight days. Roger had secretly gone to his house and arranged with little Basque that as soon as his master returned Roger should be told.

Meanwhile Sylvandire was unable to be demonstrative enough toward her husband. She asked him how he spent his time in prison, and if he sometimes thought of her.

Roger assured her that the prison was a very pleasant abode; that the jailers made very attentive servants;

that he dined every day at the governor's table; that he went out with him in his carriage every afternoon, and that they played at ombre or checkers together every evening, after which, with every possible mark of respect, he was shown to a pretty room whose only defects consisted of a door with two bolts and a window with four bars. The chevalier feared that if he told Sylvandire the real state of the case, she must understand that a man who had suffered so much had much to avenge.

As to thinking of her, Roger fondly assured Sylvandire that he had done nothing else from morning until night, and from night until morning. In this instance, we know that Roger told the exact truth.

Then Sylvandire in turn assured Roger that she found him very much improved, and that prison life had wonderfully agreed with him.

One morning, little Basque came and told Roger that the Marquis de Cretté had returned half an hour before.

Roger left his hôtel on foot, took a carriage at the corner of the street, and proceeded to the Hôtel Cretté. The marquis was expecting him. The two friends cast themselves into each other's arms.

Cretté had learned much of what had happened to Roger, and particularly the details of his two escapes and the injuries resulting therefrom. But the marquis was ignorant of the solitary confinement, the sunless cell, the torture of living days that cannot be reckoned, and last, the firm resolution taken by Roger to be revenged upon his wife, if, as he believed, his wife had been concerned in his imprisonment.

Cretté could but repeat what he had written of Sylvandire's disappearance, his own quarrel with



Monsieur de Royancourt, and his certainty that the wife herself had brought to light the unfortunate songs that had been, if not the cause of his imprisonment, at least the pretext for it.

As to Roger's release, it was due, as the prisoner had suspected, to the persistent efforts of Cretté, d'Herbigny, and Chastellux, especially of the last, who was distantly related to Monsieur d'Argenson through the women of the family, — a relationship which he had until then almost denied, and to which he began to lay claim as soon as it was likely to prove serviceable to Roger. Yet, when Monsieur de Royancourt found matters so far advanced that there were no means left of prolonging Roger's captivity, from persecutor as he had been, he became defender, and, as his influence was real, he had hastened the prisoner's release.

The rest is known.

All that Cretté told his friend accorded so well with what he had twenty times repeated to himself, that he did not for a moment doubt that they had arrived at a most accurate estimate of cause and effect.

Realizing that they must meet only on urgent occasion, the two friends parted with renewed assurances of their undying friendship which, for that matter, had been sufficiently tested for them to be able to count upon each other.

Yet, for the entire acquittal of his conscience, morally convinced though Roger was, he wished to gain possession of material proofs that would admit of no appeal on the part of the voice of doubt, which, at the bottom of his heart, still clamored at times. "Perhaps —"

In his cell he had learned to think without speaking. Thus far, he had put into faithful practice the enforced

lesson. No one had a suspicion of what was passing in the depths of his soul. He began, therefore, to act.

He summoned Breton.

Breton was a faithful servant and one on whom he could rely.

Questioned as to Monsieur de Royancourt, Breton replied that during the chevalier's absence the marquis had come every day to the hôtel, and that his visits had ceased only on the day of Madame d'Anguilhem's disappearance.

Now it became clear to Roger that, had his dear wife cherished the laudable purpose of setting out to find him, she would not have failed to inform her household, whereas, Monsieur de Royancourt himself had admitted to Roger that, on going away, Sylvandire had said nothing to any one.

Madame d'Anguilhem had, a month before vanishing, dismissed a maid that had served her for ten years. To Roger this seemed very suspicious, since Mademoiselle Clarisse was a person whose faithfulness and efficiency were too remarkable for her to be sent away without reason, and on the eve of undertaking alone a fatiguing journey.

Roger hoped to extract something from Sylvandire herself; but when, hypocrite even in love, he in turn tried to learn from his wife how she had employed her time in his absence, there were endless affectations and coquettish refusals to tell. It was substantially impossible to prove that she had resided in any place whatever. Sylvandire merely admitted having spent two months in the Convent des Filles-Dieu, which, it is true, was a convent widely renowned for the austerity of its rules, but one where Monsieur de Royancourt, Madame de Maintenon's friend, came and went at will,

his sister being the superior and his cousin the treasurer of the convent aforesaid.

To seek information at the Filles-Dieu would be proclaiming aloud his distrust; hence Roger signified his faith in all that was told him, and in turn assured Sylvandire that convent life had greatly enhanced her beauty. They continued, withal, to live as a model household. More frequently than ever Roger greeted Monsieur Bouteau with the affectionate appellation of father-in-law, and heaped upon Monsieur de Royancourt the most friendly courtesies.

Those of his friends who did not know, as Cretté did, that all this tenderness concealed something enigmatical, mysterious, tragic perhaps, sneered not a little when the conversation turned upon the young couple's unsophisticated fondness for each other. Nor in certain circles, as will readily be understood, did they fail to make merry at the expense of Madame d'Anguilhem, the virtuous Penelope who, instead of awaiting her Ulysses, had gone in search of him, no one knew where, but certainly where he was not.

Meanwhile Roger had given Breton full power, and charged him to bribe any of Monsieur de Royancourt's people. One morning, while attending his master, Breton announced that the marquis' coachman, whom his master had ill-treated the day before, had consented to speak, for the sum of one hundred louis. Breton advised the chevalier to take advantage of the momentary dissatisfaction.

The chevalier followed Breton's advice. He sent the coachman a hundred louis, and this is what he learned the same day from the mouth of the knave himself.

Beginning with the date of Sylvandire's departure,

Monsieur de Royancourt had every night after supper visited the little hamlet of Luzarches, sometimes on horseback, sometimes by carriage. He spent four or five hours there; and regularly at two o'clock in the morning, he took the road back to Paris, where he arrived at four. He then went to bed and feigned not to have been away from home. By way of additional precaution, his carriage returned to the hôtel at midnight, and the household — with the exception of the coachman who knew that he sent the carriage back empty, and the valet de chambre who sat up for Monsieur de Royancourt until four o'clock in the morning — supposed that the master had returned.

Roger was on their track. He resolved to follow to the other extremity this clew, of which he held one end in his hand. Consequently, he set off himself for Luzarches.

There he began his inquiries, and learned that a young woman had come and established herself in a house in which she lived alone. A nun attended her. A man, whose name they did not know, but who was of very distinguished appearance, came to see her every evening. Sylvandire was described with absolute accuracy, and the portrait of Monsieur de Royancourt was so like him that there was no mistaking it.

Another than Roger would have made a disturbance, would have challenged Monsieur de Royancourt to a duel, or had him assassinated by a couple of ruffians in some corner. But for the disturbance, there was For-l'Évêque, for the duel, the Bastille, and for the assassination, a mode of vengeance, which, however, did not even enter Roger's head, — there was the rack.

All that, therefore, was no revenge, since such

revenge brought its own punishment. What Roger required was a revenge that left him free, happy, and yet avenged.

Besides, his hatred was concentrated especially upon Sylvandire. It was Sylvandire who had betrayed him; it was Sylvandire whom he had loved; it was Sylvandire who had given him a moment's happiness; it was Sylvandire whom he hated so cruelly that he feared he loved her still.

From the hour that Roger had resolved upon revenge, he had determined what that revenge should be. He therefore returned to the plan stored in a corner of his brain, where he had placed it for use when the time came. His soul, it must be said, from the date of his release from prison, was nothing else than a stormy sea whose vast waves rose high and died away. Like tempests brooded his thoughts, athwart which, from time to time, gleamed a good motive with lightning-like flash, but as quickly also it expired.

Now sure of his unhappiness, now certain of having been duped, he felt strong and considered himself justified.

It was necessary, first of all, that Roger should ascertain to a certainty that he no longer loved this accursed woman, lest the execution of his project should be arrested by one of those heart pangs that are mistaken for twinges of conscience. We have said, and we repeat, that Roger so hated Sylvandire as not yet to be sure that he did not love her.

Therefore, one by one, he analyzed his feelings toward Sylvandire.

When he came upon her without warning, there was a keen shock of the heart, a deep pain, a sudden chill, something like the cold sensation of a lancet's blade

piercing a vein. At such times, in spite of his self-control, Roger grew pale, and the blood rushed back upon his heart. The next moment his gorged heart would expel the blood with such violence as to cause a giddiness that made him think he was about to be ill. Yet, in the midst of all these sensations, so varied, so conflicting, so convulsive, he must live his ordinary life, must converse indifferently, must smile graciously. It was torture more cruel perhaps than that of the prison at Châlon-sur-Saône.

Sometimes, in the middle of the night, startled out of a dream in which he thought himself still a prisoner on a wretched pallet in an infectious cell, Roger would wake with bounding heart, panting breast, and his hair standing on end, to find himself softly couched under silken canopies in a room voluptuously lighted by an alabaster lamp, and there, sleeping tranquilly beside him, would be Sylvandire, that glowing siren, that enticing enchantress, who, under a marvellous exterior, concealed such a hideous entity. Then he would rise on his rigid arm, gaze at her with eyes fixed, searching, and deadly, and recall that story of Galland's, which had just appeared and was creating such a furor, the tale of a man who had married a vampire, and who saw her return to the conjugal couch after her monstrous feast in a graveyard.

Meanwhile, Sylvandire was dreaming a pleasant dream, breathing an amorous sigh, and disclosing in a voluptuous smile the white enamelled teeth beneath her coral lips.

Then would Roger be seized with a fierce desire to stifle the woman in a loving embrace, and receive with his own mouth her last sigh, that, her life having been another's, her death, at least, should be his. But he

carried out only the first part of his design. His heart failed him for the second.

As for Sylvandire, so confident was she of her power over Roger that her days were happy and her nights peaceful. Never had she chanced to surprise the fierce look that enveloped and held her unwittingly; but, it must be said, never by word or gesture did Roger betray himself.

Monsieur de Royancourt continued to visit the hôtel; but he was visibly becoming disenchanted.

"Naturally," said Roger to himself, following up the cooling process as he had followed the course of their love, "naturally, possession has brought indifference."

And he redoubled his own attentions to Sylvandire, who, on her side, impelled by a sense of guilt, returned her husband's caresses with forced ones in such measure that, aside from the madness of revenge by which he was possessed, Roger was really quite happy.

Sylvandire was very guarded, and yet it one day happened that, tired of having waited in vain expectation of Monsieur de Royancourt for nearly a whole week, without his deigning to send her even a message, she wrote a very reproachful little note, and rang for one of her own people to have it sent by her confidential attendant.

But Madame d'Anguilhem's servants had gone out, and it was Breton that answered her bell. As Sylvandire was holding the letter in her hand, she dared not postpone sending it. Besides, Breton announced himself as quite unoccupied at the time, and suggested to Madame d'Anguilhem that he himself undertake her commission. To refuse was, plainly, to give the valet grounds for suspicion. She put on a bold face, therefore, handed Breton the letter, and said indifferently,—

"To be taken immediately to the Marquis de Royancourt."

Breton was ascending to change his dress when he met his master on the stairs. He therefore displayed the letter of which he was the bearer, with a questioning glance as to whether he should carry it to its destination.

Roger was about to yield to temptation and take it, when he heard behind a door the rustle of a satin robe. He knew that Sylvandire was spying.

"A letter from madame to Monsieur de Royancourt," said the valet.

"Very well; deliver it at once," answered Roger, "and say to the marquis for me that it is unkind of him thus to neglect us; that I have not seen him for eight days; that I am highly indignant at such indifference, and that I forgive him only on the condition that he comes to dine with us this very day."

"But, monsieur," said Breton.

"Quite right, quite right, go, my friend, go," pursued Roger. "I am not needing you at present."

Then he descended ten or twelve steps, and, to Breton's great amazement, entered Sylvandire's room.

"It was very good of you, my dear," said he, as he drew down his ruffles, and arranged the folds of his jabot, "very good of you to send for dear Royancourt. I wish him to taste the roe that my father has sent us from Anguilhem."

Sylvandire, who, in this brief space, had turned red, white, yellow, all the colors of the rainbow in short, collected her wits and resumed her smile.

"What a delightful husband I have!" thought she, kissing Roger on both cheeks.

"What a weak master I have the misfortune to



serve!" said Breton to himself. "Would any one suppose this to be the same gentleman that gave Monsieur de Kollinski such a terrible sword-thrust at his first affair? Mere luck!"

At dinner-time, Monsieur de Royancourt was announced. The double invitation that he had received had touched him undoubtedly, for he was excessively friendly. As for Sylvandire, she was radiant. Roger observed them not too closely, was witty without being caustic, and animated without seeming forced.

At dessert, he surprised some very expressive glances exchanged between his wife and their guest.

Soon after they had risen from the table, and as they were passing into the salon for coffee, he saw the marquis, who was escorting Sylvandire from the one room to the other, slip a note into her hand. Sylvandire concealed it in her bosom.

"Shameless woman, impudent rascal!" muttered Roger. "I could kill them both where they stand!"

But he controlled himself, and only a lace frill at his wrist was the worse for it. He tore it into bits.

He must secure that note. It was a very difficult thing to accomplish, but a very essential one. Roger thought about it the entire evening; then he believed he had found a way.

The success of his scheme depended on calculating the probable moment when Sylvandire would seek to learn the contents of the note.

"It will undoubtedly be this evening at her toilet," he said to himself.

During the whole evening he did not for an instant lose sight of Sylvandire. He assured himself that she had not had a moment in which to read the billet in question, and, after Monsieur de Royancourt had gone,

he concealed himself in the salon adjoining his wife's dressing-room. He then listened until he heard her enter, and when he divined that she must be in the act of reading, he set fire to the curtains at one of the windows. Quickly the flames leaped to the ceiling, and a few panes of glass broke.

"Fire! fire!" shouted Roger.

And he rushed headlong into the boudoir.

Sylvandire still held Monsieur de Royancourt's note in her hand. She made a movement to hide it; but, on seeing the wreaths of flame and smoke that filled the salon, she drew back, gave a shriek, and lost consciousness.

Roger opened her fingers, while the salon burned, and rapidly read as follows: —

"Let us forget the past, Sylvandire; often have I repented of what we have done. As for your proposition, to flee together and leave France, it is madness, and I reject it; besides, I begin to be ashamed of deceiving, as we are doing, an honest man who overwhelms me with kindnesses. Therefore, if you take my advice, Sylvandire, we shall sever all connection. You say that you are dying for love of me; live for the husband who adores you, it would be more Christian-like."

"Well, well, you twofold idiot!" said Roger to himself. "Will you now hesitate?"

And he replaced the note in Sylvandire's hand, still cold and lifeless. Then, closing the door of the boudoir, he rang for Breton.

The fire had consumed the curtains, caught in the window-ledge, and scorched the wainscoting; but, no longer finding easily assimilated food at hand, it licked its feeble tongues along the casings and curled about the wooden balustrades.

The entire hôtel was on foot in an instant, and ten minutes later there was neither fire nor smoke.

Quite alone, Sylvandire came to herself, recognized that she was in her boudoir, found the note crumpled in her hand, believed that Roger had discovered nothing, and, quite jubilant at having escaped safe and sound from the doubly threatening disaster, issued forth to mingle with the workers.

As soon as Roger saw her, he hastened to her side.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* my darling Sylvandire, what a misfortune! Your room is quite spoiled. It was so fresh, so bright! The repairing will debar us from receiving for a month at least."

"Well, my dear," said Sylvandire in the sweetest of tones, "let us go to Champigny."

"To Champigny?" repeated Roger.

"Yes. Do you dread the memories the place will recall?"

Roger opened his mouth to say, "And why not to Luzarches?" but he checked himself.

"Assuredly not," he said aloud. "And you know how precious to my heart are the memories that would recur to me in the house that you have rendered so dear; but to my mind, if you were as given to adventure as you are adorable, we would take a thousand pistoles and go off by ourselves, like two fond lovers, on a visit to that beautiful Provence whose airs you sing so marvellously to your harpsichord."

"Oh! my dear," said Sylvandire, making a charming little face, "would not such a journey be too long?"

"Very well, very well, dear! Let us say no more about it; it shall be just as you wish."

But Sylvandire was too pleased at having escaped

detection to be obstinate in her refusal. Besides, she decided that by going away she was likely to wound the pride of Monsieur de Royancourt who had just wounded her love, and, as she desired to avenge herself on the faithless one, she returned to Roger's proposition.

"No, dear, no," said she. "I will not deprive you nor deprive myself of such a pleasure; and besides, I have resolved to devote myself to pleasing you. Command, then, I am yours to obey."

Roger restrained the triumphant joy that filled his breast. He made all his preparations; but, notwithstanding the haste he made, Monsieur de Royancourt and Sylvandire were reconciled during the interval.

Hence, one fine morning, the marquis proposed to the chevalier and his wife that he should accompany them to Provence.

This was not to Roger's mind. Nevertheless, he appeared to hail Monsieur de Royancourt's proposition with delight; but he invented a business pretext, by means of which he postponed their departure.

He hoped that meanwhile a fresh quarrel would arise which would bring about another falling out.

He was not deceived.

Roger intercepted a second note from Monsieur de Royancourt, in which he announced to Sylvandire that, in order that their rupture might not this time be subject to the usual opportunities for reconciliation, he was on the very eve of departure for Utrecht.

Sylvandire endeavored in vain to conceal her vexation. Roger could follow its progress in her face and heart.

On the very day of Monsieur de Royancourt's departure for Holland, she first resumed the subject of their journey through Provence.

"Oh! on my soul," groaned Roger within himself. "I am playing the most ridiculous and the most revolting of all rôles; but, thank God! we are nearing the end."

He then seized with alacrity upon his wife's overture, and, as every preparation had long before been completed, on the next day, the first of June, 1713, the young couple left Paris, as loving, apparently, as two turtle-doves.

## XXVI.

HOW ROGER AND SYLVANDIRE MADE A CHARMING  
EXCURSION TO PROvence, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

ROGER had played his little part so well, in the words of King Charles IX. of Catholic memory, that up to the very moment of his departure everybody was talking of his love for his wife. Every one took him seriously, even d'Herbigny, even Clos-Renaud, even Chastellux, and it was said on all sides that, although the king had been unable to regulate Richelieu's household by means of the Bastille, the Château de Châlon-sur-Saône had served the great monarch's ideas of matrimony a better turn in the case of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem.

Even Cretté himself was his friend's dupe, and gave credence to the public rumor. He knew what a beautiful and persevering woman could accomplish, and, whenever he saw Mademoiselle Poussette, he recommended her to study Sylvandire as the model of a great coquette.

"Look at his wild schemes of vengeance,—all still-born," he said. "Poor Roger! he wished to kill everybody, and here he is now doing anything but that. However, perhaps it is the wisest course; but certainly the chevalier's example will not lead me to surrender my liberty."

While all Paris was engaged in conversation of this sort, Roger and his wife were on their way to the South; two days after setting out they were passing through Châlon. The chevalier desired to observe what effect the sight of the prison in which he had been confined

would have on his wife. He therefore conducted her to the castle walls.

"Well," demanded Sylvandire, after having two or three times looked first at the walls and then at him, "why do you wish me to see this horrible building?"

"Because it is where I spent eleven months while you were searching all the world over for me, darling," answered Roger.

Sylvandire made a charming little *moue* which meant,—

"Goodness! however amiable the governor, one could not find it very entertaining in that place."

"Yes, yes," said Roger, in answer to his wife's thought; "yes, I suffered much there, but more from our separation than from my imprisonment."

"And we were so far from suspecting it," was Sylvandire's response. The "we" struck Roger as charming.

On the following day, Roger and Sylvandire reached Lyons, where they stayed two or three days. In his constant solicitude for Sylvandire, Roger would not permit her to become fatigued.

During these two or three days, Roger and Sylvandire made a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Fourvières, the most famous of all the madonnas of France for preserving perfect harmony in families where it exists, and restoring it to those from which it has departed.

On the part of Sylvandire and Roger, this, of course, was an unnecessary precaution: they loved each other devotedly, they anticipated no diminishing of their mutual affection.

After a stay similar to the one they had made at Châlon, the couple quitted the second capital of France, and halted successively at Valence, Orange, and Avignon.

At Avignon, especially. How could one pass by

Avignon and fail to visit the fountain of Vaucluse? That would have been high treason against poetry.

Now, in those days, lovers were very fond of poetry, and especially fond of nature; they loved hill, valley, and stream. See "*Astrée*" and "*Cléopâtre*."

They therefore made a pilgrimage to the fountain of Vaucluse, just as they had made one to Notre Dame de Fourvières, and all the way Roger kept calling Sylvandire his dear Laura, and Sylvandire addressed Roger only as her handsome Petrarch.

Beggars to whom they gave alms along the road shed tears at sight of the beautiful pair.

They continued their journey and came to Arles. They desired to see the ruins of the city which at one time disputed with Byzantium the title of queen of the world. Save for the mistral, according to the savants, Arles was Constantinople.

But there was just then much less interest in antiquity than in an event that had happened within a fortnight.

A worthy bourgeois of the town of Arles, whose misfortune it had been to take unto himself a wife with a character the very opposite, it seemed, of his own, unable to endure the daily annoyances due to their clashing temperaments, resolved for his part to become a widower. But to become a widower would avail nothing, unless he could achieve his purpose in such a way as to be shielded from the rigors of the law.

Now, here is the expedient to which that worthy Arlesian resorted to attain his end.

On the banks of the Rhone he had a country house very much liked by his wife, whose custom it was to spend all her Sundays there. The means of transportation usually employed by the lady upon these occasions was a charming little mule, appropriately caparisoned, and of which,



as the country-side said, as much care was taken as of the pope's. What did the murderer do? For the three days preceding the accustomed journey, he deprived the poor animal of all drink; it followed that, on Sunday morning, accompanied by her husband, who, for once, wished to be of her party, the dame set out, riding her mule. The latter, constantly on the lookout for water, had no sooner caught sight of the Rhone, than she broke into a run that nobody could check, and dashed into the flood with the speed of a stag as it leaps into a stream when hard pressed by a pack of hounds. Fortunately or unfortunately, as the reader chooses to adopt the point of view of husband or wife, the Rhone was at that point so swift that both dame and mule were swept away by the torrent; and, again fortunately or unfortunately, the water, being as deep as it was swift, both very soon disappeared beneath the waves, while the husband, chained to the bank undoubtedly by grief, raised a great hue and cry, tossing his arms and shouting for help in the hope that no help would come.

His hope was realized. The wife and mule were drowned together. The husband regretted the mule; but great causes demand great sacrifices.

However, the affair had made such a noise that justice bestirred itself. The husband was summoned to appear in court; but he had seemed so disconsolate, he had shed so many tears over the death of his consort, that, in the absence of evidence, the judge had set him at liberty.

Sylvandire was deeply moved by the poor woman's fate, and Roger declared, in his indignation, that if the man were not a clown he would seek him out and demand satisfaction for his infamous conduct.

And they hastened to leave the unfortunate town, and the next day arrived at Marseilles.

As this was the goal of their journey, they made arrangements to stay for a time at a hotel. On the very day of their arrival, they went for a stroll on the Cannebière and the Allées de Meilhan, everywhere making open display of their affection, as evinced by the most extravagant endearments. People took them for a recently wedded pair enjoying their honeymoon, and they gazed in admiration.

In the hôtel where they stayed, among the people whom they met, everywhere, in short, favorable comment was made upon this fortunate pair.

"What a handsome man, and how his wife adores him!" exclaimed the women.

All Marseilles was talking of Roger and Sylvandire.

One day, Roger, who had gone out alone in the early morning, returned to their rooms and told his wife that toward noon they would go to pay a visit to a Sardinian broker through whom he had just disposed of a troublesome piece of property.

On Sylvandire's asking what toilet would be suitable for the occasion, Roger replied, —

"The handsomest you have, my dear. I wish this stranger to report in his own country that in all his travels he has seen no woman more beautiful than you."

Such advice Sylvandire always followed with an alacrity that did credit to her conjugal obedience. Her beauty, moreover, enhanced by elegant laces and flashing diamonds, was truly supernatural, and when she entered her chair, the bearers themselves were dazzled.

The Sardinian lived in the Rue du Paradis. He was a tall old man whose beard was gray and pointed, as worn in the time of Cardinal Richelieu by Jew, Greek, Arab, everybody, in short, Sardinian excepted, and he spoke all tongues. He seemed to be impatiently awaiting

his two visitors; with brightening countenance he hastened forward to meet them. Sylvandire's beauty seemed to electrify all who came near her.

Nothing breeds confidence like success. Sylvandire observed the effect that she produced; she was adorably gracious and amiable.

Like a gallant husband, and to show to advantage the treasures of his wife's intellect, Roger turned the conversation sometimes upon trivial, sometimes upon grave, topics.

Sylvandire supported Boileau's test, and passed with perfect ease "from grave to gay, from lively to severe."

Roger swelled with pride; from time to time he would give the Sardinian a significant nod which might be taken to mean, —

"You see that I told you the truth."

And the broker would reply with a look that clearly meant, —

"She is a woman such as one seldom sees."

Roger begged Sylvandire to speak Italian, and for half an hour Sylvandire engaged in conversation in the Tuscan idiom and with a Roman accent.<sup>?</sup>

Roger begged Sylvandire to play something on the harpsichord, and Sylvandire played a bit from the opera of "Orphée," and sang to her own accompaniment.

The strains terminated in the midst of applause, and the listeners exchanged nods and smiles afresh.

The Sardinian whispered a few words in Roger's ear.

"Oh! as to that," replied the chevalier, "it is impossible! and I fear that madame would never consent, whatever my entreaties."

"Why, what is monsieur saying, dear?" asked Sylvandire.

"Nothing," answered Roger.

"But what is it?"

"He requests an impossibility."

"What is it?"

"He says that he has seen the Spanish gypsies dance, the almehs of Egypt and the bayaderes of India."

"Well?"

"And he pretends —"

"What?"

"He is convinced that you surpass them all in grace, and he is sure that if you would dance a minuet or a gavotte —"

"Oh!" exclaimed Sylvandire.

"There, I told you so, my dear," returned Roger; "it is not to be thought of."

"Yet, my love," said Sylvandire, not wishing to stop on the high road to coquetry and conquest, "if I had some one to go through the figures with, I would willingly dance a minuet."

"Here, take me," cried the old Sardinian.

"Very well," said Roger, "and I will supply the music."

And he struck up the air of the minuet of "Exaudet," while Sylvandire, with her grotesque partner, executed its figures with ravishing grace and precision.

Sylvandire's success rose to a triumph.

"How old is madame?" inquired the merchant in tones of profound admiration.

"Nineteen years, seven months, and fifteen days," replied Roger, "not yet twenty years old, monsieur, not twenty years old!"

"You did not say a word too much, my dear monsieur," returned the Sardinian; "and your eulogies of madame have, I must admit, fallen below the truth."

"Ah! monsieur!" exclaimed Sylvandire, casting a grateful glance at her husband.

"No, upon my word," proceeded the broker with a leer, "you are the most charming lady I have ever met, a truly Oriental beauty, a pearl of the seraglio, a veritable houri, a priceless woman."

"It seems to me, dear Roger, that I am very gallantly complimented in your presence," affectedly remarked Sylvandire.

"No, dear," returned Roger; "you are worthily appreciated, that is all."

Thereupon they took their leave; but, as he was showing them out, the Sardinian invited the couple to breakfast with him, the next morning, on board of a tartan riding at anchor off the harbor. Besides the breakfast, there would be the sport of fishing; it was the season of the year for sardines.

A pleasure party so novel seemed enchanting to Sylvandire, who was accepting cordially, but on observing that Roger made no response, she turned uneasily toward him.

"Well," she asked, "why are you silent? Would you refuse?"

"No, my dear; but I have my fears."

"Fears! and of what?"

"That you may not prove to be a good sailor."

"Oh! there is no danger."

"Then you wish to join this fishing excursion?"

"I am dying to do so."

"Your will is law."

"Delightful husband that you are!"

"Very well, then, my dear host," said Roger, "expect us to-morrow."

"To-morrow," repeated Sylvandire.

"To-morrow," echoed the Sardinian.

On the morrow, at the appointed hour, they were at

the Sardinian's. A neat and handsome little shallop awaited them at the quay a short distance above the custom-house. All three got into it and they were taken out to the tartan, which was moored off the Château d'If.

It was a beautiful vessel, built for speed, and it skimmed the waters like a sea-bird. It was commanded by a captain thirty or thirty-five years old, who was noticeable for his Oriental face and his foreign costume. The captain spoke only Italian, which afforded Sylvandire fresh opportunity for displaying her linguistic talent. He had magnificent eyes, a Grecian nose, and teeth like pearls.

They breakfasted heartily. They saw the nets drawn in, breaking with the weight of the fish, and they agreed forthwith to be present at the torchlight fishing on the next night.

As they went back to their lodgings, Sylvandire was tireless in her praises of the captain; how handsome he was, how strong, how brave, what a lofty style of expression he had, how luxurious had been his entertainment of his guests, how obedient his crew at a word, a gesture, a sign!

"Most assuredly," said Sylvandire as they walked along the quay, "that man is above his station."

"Most assuredly," answered Roger.

The next morning Roger went back to the Sardinian's; on his return, he found his wife laughing and dancing quite alone.

"Good!" said he, "she is in love with the captain already."

They were not to start until six o'clock in the afternoon. Every ten minutes Sylvandire glanced at the clock; she would have liked to turn the hands forward. Roger

smiled bitterly and shook his head; but Sylvandire was not thinking of Roger.

At the moment of embarking came the permit from the inspector of the port. Roger asked the Sardinian if they would have good weather.

"Superb," answered Sylvandire.

But the Sardinian winked very significantly, as if to say, "Never fear, we shall have the sort of weather we need."

They entered a small boat, and, as they were rowing against the wind, they advanced very slowly. As a result, night came on, and they were still only off the *Île de Pommègue*. During the passage, great clouds had gathered on the horizon, and were rolling in like a tide; then they surrounded the moon, which, losing itself amid their cottony billows, seemed like an island of fire; but, little by little they drew it within their dense folds and extinguished its light.

The sea itself was threatening, and dashed noisily against the rocks and the shore.

Through the darkness, long streaks of phosphorescent foam were seen speeding like trails of fire.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cried Sylvandire, "it seems to me that we are going to have a storm."

"What do you say to the weather, my dear host," inquired Roger of the Sardinian.

"Fine weather for freezing! fine weather for freezing!" answered the latter, with a mocking look which Sylvandire caught, and which frightened her.

"What do you mean, monsieur?" she asked, shrinking back against Roger.

Roger shuddered at the touch of this woman whom he had loved so well, and whom perhaps he still loved.

Mechanically he drew away.

"I am afraid," said Sylvandire.

Roger did not speak, and he let his head fall into his two hands.

The Sardinian at that moment lighted a torch, and, rising, he waved it for some time in the air, and then he extinguished it.

The wind moaned in melancholy gusts; it sounded like the wailing of human souls.

Suddenly, a flash illumined the heavens, and by its light the tartan was seen tacking about, only five hundred feet away.

Presently, they descried something advancing through the gloom; it was a yawl manned by five men.

Two men were rowing; two men were standing in the bow; the fifth was sitting in the stern.

In the last, Sylvandire recognized the captain of the tartan.

But the face that she had deemed so handsome the day before, she now thought stamped with a sinister expression.

"Come alongside!" shouted the captain in Italian.

And the two boats lay side by side.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Sylvandire, judging from the expression of the new-comers' faces that they had nothing to do, as she had supposed, with a pleasure party, "*Mon Dieu!* what is the matter? What are they going to do?"

She had barely uttered these words when both oarsmen and the two men in front boarded their boat; and while the two oarsmen seized, or pretended to seize, Roger, the others took Sylvandire in their arms and bore her away.

"Roger!" she cried, "Roger! help! help! save me, Roger! save me, save your Sylvandire!"

Instinctively and mechanically Roger sprang up; but



the two men held him fast. True, had Roger wished, he could have taken one in each hand and hurled both together into the sea.

Meanwhile, white with terror, Sylvandire was taken from the boat into the yawl.

"Roger, Roger!" she essayed to cry once more. "Roger, help! I am dying!"

And she lost consciousness.

As Sylvandire's voice died away in its last appeal, Roger was forced to recall all the hardships that he had endured, all the dishonor that had been heaped upon him, all the shame that he had suffered, to refrain from leaping into the yawl and snatching her from the hands of those men.

He lifted his head, and he let it fall again between his hands.

"Push off!" cried the Sardinian.

The captain took Sylvandire from the arms of the men that had kidnapped her, the oarsmen sprang to their oars, and the yawl moved swiftly away.

"*Addio, padrone!*" shouted the captain.

"*Addio!*" returned the trader, with the malicious little laugh peculiar to him.

Roger sent a long look after Sylvandire. He could still see her white dress shining out in the night; and, as men and yawl were already lost to sight in the darkness, one might have fancied it a ghost gliding over the surface of the sea.

But, in a few moments, it, too, had disappeared in the fog, and nothing more could be seen.

The old man immediately seized the oars and began to row away from the yawl, and in the direction of the land, with a sturdiness that one would never have looked for in his thin and debilitated frame.

"Well," he said to Roger, after almost ten minutes of silence, and easing up the movement of his oars, "well, now you are free, monsieur le sevalier. Have matters gone as you wished, and are you satisfied with us?"

"Yes," replied Roger, gloomily, "yes, I am free, thanks to a crime!"

"Bah! a crime!" repeated the old man; "you need not look at it so. It is a joke, that is all. Your lady is going straight to Tunis. The captain has orders from an Indian prince who wishes a French wife. You were tired of yours; now both are suited."

Roger took a last look at the horizon and saw indeed, in a field of moonlight, the tartan speeding away into the white fog in the direction of Tunis.

"Come," said the old man, "we must think of ourselves now, for we are nearing land. Rend your clothes quickly, wet yourself from head to foot in the sea-water, and we must break a bench or two of the boat."

With respect to himself, Roger silently executed these orders, and, aided by the wind which became more and more threatening, they arrived in port at about one o'clock in the morning.

As soon as the Sardinian came in sight of the Round Tower, he set up such a clamor of sobs and groans and vociferations that Roger was aroused from a horrible trance into which he had fallen.

"*O povero! ô povero marito!*" he cried. "*Ohime! ohime!*"

These ejaculations, with all their changes rung in a variety of tongues, brought out the custom-house officials and their body of guards, with here and there a scattering of belated citizens.

"What is the matter?" shouted the chief of the excise-men.

"The matter! You can ask what is the matter! *Ah! che schiagure*, such a beautiful woman! *Oh! che peccato!*"

And, all the while the old man was venting his unintelligible cries, the bark continued to advance.

"But tell us what has happened!" cried the bystanders.

Then, while landing, the old man declared that just as they had reached the tartan where Roger, Sylvandire and himself were about to join a fishing party, a boat caught by a big wave had crashed into them, breaking the rudder and a bench, and the shock was so violent that Madame d'Anguilhem who was standing, had been precipitated into the sea.

The old man went on to say that Roger had immediately jumped after his wife, but in vain. The sea was heavy, the night was black. The unfortunate Sylvandire had been seen no more.

And you should have seen the Sardinian's frantic gesticulation, his mad pantomime! You should have heard him embellish his recital with all the amplifications of Italian rhetoric!

Six times Roger had dived. The Sardinian had endeavored to hold him back by his coat-skirt, but in vain; finally, when he was about to go down the seventh time, he had seized him round the waist, had mastered him and held him by main force, assuring him that his wife had been picked up by the other boat. At last Roger had fainted away and he himself, poor old man, had meanwhile brought the skiff into port. As for the men in the yawl, they had not been seen again nor did he know what people they were, the violence of the waves having instantly swept them out of sight.

Monsieur d'Anguilhem was pitied; some of the by-

standers, more sympathetic than others, shed tears. He stood speechless, downcast, motionless. His dejection was taken for despair bordering on madness, and their interest in him was augmented by his forlorn attitude. Had he been poor, he would have been overwhelmed with alms, the circumstances were so evident, his grief so real.

Upon returning to his hotel, Roger shut himself up. His patron escorted him back, and narrated to every one the night's sad accident. Roger had given orders that he should be left alone with his grief; and so no one entered his room except the Sardinian trader, who came the next morning at ten o'clock to learn how the bereaved husband had passed the night.

Then each looked to the bolting of the door, and Roger counted out five hundred pistoles to the Sardinian; in exchange for which, the latter presented him an official report signed by four known citizens of the place, setting forth in minutest detail the nocturnal misadventure which had caused Madame d'Anguilhem's death.

The Chevalier d'Anguilhem despatched this official report to Maître Bouteau, together with a letter full of chastened reflections.

He also announced the loss of his well-beloved wife to the Marquis de Cretté, d'Herbigny, Clos-Renaud, and Chastellux.

Then he started for Anguilhem, where he arrived twelve days after Sylvandire's embarkment for Tunis.

Now, let us frankly avow a fact which our readers have undoubtedly already guessed.

The Chevalier Roger Tancred d'Anguilhem had purely and simply sold his wife to a Tunisian corsair, whose agent in France was the Sardinian broker.

It was not badly planned for a provincial.

## XXVII.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM LEARNED THAT HIS FATHER HAD NOT DELIVERED TO MADEMOISELLE DE BEUZERIE THE LETTER RESTORING HER FREEDOM, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

THE Baron d'Anguilhem, it will readily be understood, with his mingled love and respect for the château of his fathers, had not experienced such a change of fortune without thought of affecting a few changes for the better in his estate. The marriage over, his affairs with Roger settled, back at Anguilhem, in short, he had set about the great work that had so long engaged his mind, and which want of funds alone had kept him from undertaking.

The first of these improvements had been a grand avenue of sycamores, which he had laid out in front of his house, and which in these two years and a half had already become very handsome; moreover, between the trees had been set a hedge of elder and hazel. At the end of the avenue, which was nearly an eighth of a league in length, was seen to rise the manor of Anguilhem, enlarged by a story, which was itself surmounted by a belvedere pavilion, a fashion that was beginning to be introduced, even in the environs of Loches.

Needless to say, in this architectural renovation, which lent the house a lordly little air that was delightful to behold, the famous tower of La Guérite had been scrupulously respected.

Then, having enlarged his house, the baron bethought himself of extending his domains. He bought the famous

marsh, two leagues in extent, which offered nothing but fine snipe and duck hunting for winter, but which gave the estate the same stretch that the old barony had possessed; then, one after another, he had bought up all the little woodlands that had so long been objects of covetousness with him, so that the baron was now able to speak of my woods, my marshes, my meadows,—a privilege which, to do him justice, he did not abuse.

Finally, dependents were added in proportion to the estate.

He had two farmers instead of one, three horses were in his stable, and among them figured Christopher, whom he had brought back with him from Paris, and who, like the old soldiers that fought at Steinkerke and Bergen-op-Zoom, was looked upon as a pensioner; then, besides the two women, Mesdemoiselles Marie and Gothon, and the gamekeeper, Lajeunesse, he had two additional men servants.

Nor have we made mention of the Abbé Dubuquoi, who, no longer needed as a tutor, was elevated to the rank of librarian, and who spent his time among the booksellers of Loches, extolling the two hundred and forty ill-sorted volumes that formed the utmost extent of his empire.

Thanks to this establishment, beneath, however, rather than above his means, the Baron d'Anguilhem was considered the richest landholder of the neighborhood.

The three hundred thousand livres which he had retained out of Monsieur de Bouzenois' fortune brought him in, therefore, a million a year in bows, and bows that were the most sought after in the province.

As for the baroness, she remained precisely the same, that is to say, the most perfect type of the excellent wife, the excellent mother. However, she had added to

the six gowns already in her possession, the two gowns that she had had made in Paris; but, upon great occasions, she still continued to make the pastry herself, which she did, moreover, to perfection, and to dry with her own hands the handsome Japanese plates that Roger had wiped so carefully.

We have led back to Roger by this route, because, in the midst of their changed fortunes, the good father and the tender mother thought only of the son to whom they owed it all. When they were together, which happened often, the chevalier's name, uttered by the one or the other, was very certain to turn the conversation on the topic of this well-beloved son; and yet, it must be said, there were moments when the baron and the baroness accused Roger of ingratitude.

This was because Monsieur and Madame d'Anguilhem had known nothing of Roger's imprisonment. Cretté had rightly comprehended that the announcement of such news would prostrate them, and since they, confined in their province and possessed of no relative in Paris, could in no manner assist their son's friends in the steps they were taking, he had determined to spare them useless grief. He had therefore written them that the chevalier, having been charged with a secret mission, had set out for Holland, notifying them, in addition to this, that, as his place of residence must be concealed from all, they would probably receive no letter from him for a time, owing to the measure then recently adopted by the government, and so happily continued even to our own day, of opening letters for the very innocent purpose of knowing what they contained. They had, therefore, had no news of Roger for fifteen months, and this, thanks to Cretté's letter, his parents had clearly understood; but what they had been quite unable to make out, on the other

hand, was that Loches did not lie on the shortest route from Paris to The Hague.

Upon his release from prison, Roger had written to Anguilhem; but, warned by Cretté, he had maintained his parents in error. His letter, as may be supposed, had been welcomed with delight. Yet, after so long an absence, they especially longed to see him. Invitations to come and spend a month at the Château d'Anguilhem had then succeeded each other with the unweariedness of maternal love; but, in the midst of his grave purposes, Roger had not had time to attend to the claims of his good parents.

When starting for Marseilles, Roger had at last written that he was about to make a trip through Provence, and that he would return by way of Anguilhem, where he would stay a month or two.

At once, all was put in readiness at the château to receive the heir apparent, to feast the prodigal son. Men were set at work upon the finest room in the house, and more furniture was ordered from Loches, in order that Madame d'Anguilhem should want for nothing on her arrival.

Hence, when a chaise made its appearance at the end of the sycamore avenue, advancing with a smartness of pace that did not bespeak the province, a shout rang through the château: "The chevalier! the chevalier!" and all fell into line.

The chaise came on at full speed. It stopped at the entrance. The door opened, and Roger fell into the arms of his father and mother, who wept tears of joy; then from their arms he turned to those of his old tutor, the Abbé Dubuquoi.

A few steps behind them stood the servants, the old drawn by their affection, and the new by curiosity.



Old and new found the young master a very handsome lord.

As for Castor, he was barking from the kennel, and bounding as if he would break his chain.

After the first excitement, the baroness remembered that one of her children was missing. She glanced at the carriage, and, seeing it empty, she cried, —

“And where is Madame d’Anguilhem?”

A vivid blush overspread Roger’s countenance, and a tear that was not hypocritical fell from his eye.

Let us hasten to say that only one fell.

“I have met with a great misfortune, mother,” said Roger. “I have lost Madame d’Anguilhem. But let us go in; I will tell you about it.”

It would be difficult to convey to the reader an idea of the outcry of grief and amazement that met, in the salon, the recital of the catastrophe at Marseilles.

The baroness thought herself about to faint away with grief, and fell to repeating like G ron te, —

“What business had she to be in that vessel?”

However, Roger very soon consoled her, and, to accomplish the great miracle, he had needed only to take his mother aside and say to her these few words, —

“God, who knows all, mother, knows that Madame d’Anguilhem did not make me happy, and, unfortunately, the world knows also that she has not always held our name in the respect which was its due; her misfortune is therefore but a punishment.”

Forced to lie on many points, on this one, at least, Roger did not lie.

It had been more than three years since Roger had seen Anguilhem; but his absence had not been long enough for him to have forgotten anything. All its associations were still fresh in his heart, and every one of

them was connected with his love for Mademoiselle de Beuzerie. Older memories he had none; it seemed to him as if he had begun to live only on the day on which he first saw Constance.

As we have said, the baroness had made ready the finest room in the château; but Roger asked to sleep in his little room. It will be remembered that it was there that the young girl, whom he thought dead, had appeared to him, bidding him live. He approached the picture of Christ, knelt, as he had formerly been accustomed to do, and tried to recall his childish prayer; but, when he had prayed in those days, he was young, pure, full of illusions and of faith; and above all he had not committed an act that, take it altogether, strongly resembled a crime.

Roger went to bed; but he lay there a long time without going to sleep. At last, sleep came, and dreams with sleep; the picture seemed to be swinging back again as in his boyish vision; but this time, not Constance appeared, but Sylvandire, who descended from the pedestal and came, cold and icy, and lay down beside him.

Three times Roger awoke, and three times, on falling asleep again, did he dream the same dream.

He rose in the morning at dawn, went himself to the stable and saddled Christopher, and, as he hoped to drive away the memory of Sylvandire by one more tender, he followed the road to the place where, on a certain Easter night, he had found Monsieur de Beuzerie's coach upset in the marsh, and had returned in triumph with Constance on this same Christopher who, after an interval of six years, was taking him back to the same spot.

Roger recognized the place. It seemed to him that the event had happened but yesterday, and that all that had happened since was a dream.

At breakfast time, in a calmer mood and a more tranquil frame of mind, Roger returned to the château. The reminiscences of morning had gained the better of the dreams of night; Constance had vanquished Sylvandire.

During the breakfast, Roger inquired after the entire neighborhood; but, as is usual with people who think very much of one person, of that one he dared not say a word. He kept hoping that his father or his mother would pronounce the name of Mademoiselle de Beuzerie; but that name did not leave their lips.

To tell the truth, however, Roger's impatience was not exempt from anxiety. Every moment, among the genealogical enumerations of the province, he was expecting to hear from his father's mouth these fatal words:—

“By the way, Mademoiselle Constance de Beuzerie has married Monsieur de Croisey,” — or some other person.

But, to Roger's great surprise, the baron and the baroness appeared to have a mutual understanding, and neither of them mentioned Constance.

After breakfast, Roger mounted Christopher, who moved off with a very bad grace. He was beginning to think, having recognized in the chevalier a few old unrelinquished traits, that his love-chases were about to begin anew. Now, Christopher had grown older as well as the other people in this story. Christopher, in short, was six years older.

This time, Roger pursued a route that the poor animal again recognized. It led to La Chapelle-Saint-Hippolyte, whither Roger and Constance had fled, and whose good curé had so scrupulously betrayed them.

He hoped that the curé, on recognizing him, would inquire about Constance.

Alas! the curé was dead, and his place was filled by another curé sent from Lorient. The new pastor had

never known Constance; there was no likelihood then of his mentioning Constance.

As for the new curé's housekeeper, he had brought her with him from Lorient: there was then no chance of her knowing more than her master. Besides, she spoke nothing but low Breton, a language that Roger had little knowledge of, albeit the savants have since discovered that it was the ancient Celtic tongue.

Roger therefore returned to the château as ignorant as when he went away.

The same silence was maintained at dinner. Roger, too, was silent and preoccupied; he ransacked every corner of his brain for some phrase by which he might broach that important topic. Finally, after a thousand circumlocutions which brought him no help from his parents, he ventured.

"And — and — you say nothing about our ancient feud with the Beuzeries, father," he said, trying to smile.

"It has quite calmed down, and we are cruelly avenged," answered the baron.

"Indeed! and how is that?" cried Roger, trembling in every fibre at the thought that perhaps Constance was dead or unhappily married.

"Think of it," replied the baron, the baroness meanwhile regarding her son uneasily, "think of it, Constance is not married; she is still single."

Roger shook like a leaf. He reddened and grew pale by turns. He essayed to rise from his arm-chair and fell back into his place. Then tears came to his eyes, and with a deep sigh he let his head sink upon his breast.

"Yes," said the baroness, "she has been in retirement now almost a year at the convent in Loches, and it is not quite certain that, in spite of her parents' opposition, she will not take the veil."

Now, when Roger thought that he had lost Constance, he had wished to join the Jesuits. So, when Constance lost Roger, she had desired to become a nun.

God, then, is at the bottom of all true love.

"Unmarried," thought Roger; "unmarried, and loving me, doubtless, all the time!"

"She, who was so proud," said the baron, ignorant of what was passing in his son's mind.

"You mean," corrected the baroness, "whose parents were so proud; as for Constance, God knows that she was a dear, sweet girl, and I loved her as if I had been her mother."

Roger thanked the baroness with a look.

"And — and what did she say of my marriage?" he hesitatingly continued.

"I' faith, I know nothing about it," replied the baron with a slightly embarrassed air, "we have not seen the Beuzeries since your marriage."

The conversation was dropped there; but Roger grew more thoughtful than ever, and he rose from the table without having added another word.

After dinner, Roger took his gun, unchained Castor, whose joy at going out with his old master restored for the moment all his ancient vigor, and he resumed his walks of other days in the direction of the warren; but in three years how many days have rolled away, and with the days, how many events! At every step of the way he was confronted by regret or remorse; behind every bush he dreaded to see Sylvandire and grieved that he did not see Constance.

Roger's homecoming, however, was fêted by all the country-side; the depression occasioned by the death of the young baroness was not of long duration. Very few had known her.

Then there was another reason why the effect produced by the accident recounted by Roger to his mother, and by his mother imparted to every one else, should make so brief an impression: as a widower, Roger was a marriageable man; Roger was twenty-two years old; Roger was handsomer than he had ever been, even in the days when he had been known as "handsome Roger" or "handsome Tancredi;" in short, Roger possessed, not counting what would come to him at the death of his parents, that is, not counting his expectations, as they say in that infamous slang which is called the language of business men, Roger, we say, possessed in his own right at the time the pretty income of fifty thousand livres.

Hence every mother began, little by little, to resume her cherished idea of a match between Roger and her daughter.

Roger was the hero, therefore, of the chase, of balls and of fêtes, but, alas! he was a very melancholy hero. Yet, at these gatherings he sometimes saw a face still more melancholy than his own: it was the Vicomte de Beuzerie's. Roger avoided him, for the sight of that old man whose obstinate pride had been the chief cause of his sorrows, hurt him grievously, summoning up as it did a horde of bitter memories.

One day, when hunting, he met the viscount near the very warren where, almost three years before they had so violently quarrelled, and where, later, when setting out full of hopes and illusions, Roger had taken leave of Constance.

Monsieur de Beuzerie, who had at first crossed a clover-patch in order to avoid a meeting with the chevalier, changed his mind, and, going directly up to him, he said, —

"Monsieur d'Anguilhem, kindly tell me yourself, that I may have it from your own mouth, whether or not you are married."

"I am a widower, monsieur," replied Roger, trembling.

"Then come with me, monsieur," rejoined the viscount, "and you will save my family from despair. My daughter has gone into retirement at the Conception, she will not listen to us; she insists that we have deceived her, that you are still single, that you have not released her from her promise, in short, that she can give herself only to you or to God; and then, too, perhaps she has gone mad, for her mother and I are unable to account for her behavior during these last two years."

Roger dropped his gun and stared at the baron like a man about to faint.

"Alas! alas!" exclaimed the old man, moved even to tears, "all has been visited upon our own heads, Monsieur d'Anguilhem, and we are truly very unhappy."

Roger felt that his knees were giving way beneath him.

"Oh! monsieur le vicomte," cried he, "forgive me, forgive Constance. But I think I catch a glimpse of the truth; before going with you, permit me to return to Anguilhem. I need to ask a word of explanation from my father; after that, I am entirely at your service. At what hour to-morrow do you desire to see me at Beuzerie?"

"Wait for me, monsieur le chevalier," answered the viscount, "and to-morrow in passing I will call for you."

"I will wait for you."

"But, consider, this is no idle engagement, Monsieur d'Anguilhem. I count upon you; I may count upon you, may I not?" he continued with kindly insistence, for he

did not know whether the old insult that he had inflicted upon Roger were not still rankling in his young neighbor's heart.

Roger made him a sign with both head and hand at the same time, and immediately set off along the road to Anguilhem. However, after he had gone a hundred paces, he turned and saw that the old man was sitting down, motionless, and with bowed head, like a statue of Resignation.

Two hours later, Roger had reached Anguilhem.

"Father," said Roger to the baron who was picking some apricots in the orchard, "father, did you not, then, deliver to Mademoiselle de Beuzerie the letter announcing my marriage, which I begged you to hand to her?"

Monsieur d'Anguilhem, thus taken unawares, hesitated a moment in embarrassment.

This confusion on the part of his father whom he profoundly respected seemed to Roger like a grievous reproach. Hence, instantly seizing the baron's hands with his own, he cried, —

"Oh! my dear father, be assured that whatever you have done was done for the best."

"Well, no, my dear Roger," said the baron, "I did not deliver it. You had not told me what the letter contained, and I must confess that, considering the delicacy of our position, I feared the unfortunate letter might do more harm than good."

"And the letter?"

"It is still upstairs."

And the baron, followed by Roger, returned to the château, ascended to his room, drew from an oaken cabinet, where it had grown yellow, the fatal letter, elaborately sealed, and handed it to his son.

"Oh! I comprehend it all, now," cried Roger; "I



had told her to believe only my own words, spoken or written. She would believe nothing that did not come from me, she has all this time been waiting for me to make good my word; and she would have waited until death! Oh! noble being, how she loved me!"

Roger took the letter and went to his room, in order that, quite undisturbed, he might reflect upon past events, and perhaps also upon events to come.

XXVIII.

HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM AND MADEMOISELLE CONSTANCE DE BEUZERIE FIND THEMSELVES MORE IN LOVE THAN EVER, AND SOME OF THE PERPLEXITIES INTO WHICH ROGER IS THEREBY PLUNGED.

ROGER passed a very restless night. Again, in his dreams, he saw the picture turn, and this time it was Constance who appeared; but, just as she was stepping down and approaching his bed, Sylvandire, with threatening attitude, rose between her and Roger, and, try as the unhappy young people might, they were ever unable to come near each other.

However small Roger's faith in dreams might be, this was so like the actual state of affairs, and so marvellously prophetic that it left on his mind an impression not yet dissipated when, about eight o'clock in the morning, Monsieur de Beuzerie arrived.

The old gentleman was on horseback. Roger at once had Christopher saddled; for, since the day before, he had guessed that he was to accompany the viscount to the convent at Loches. Together they set off in the direction of the town.

At times, as they rode along, the thought that he was to see Constance again would cause the chevalier such acute anguish of heart that he would suddenly rein in his horse and grow so pale as to look as if he were about to fall. Then Monsieur de Beuzerie would

himself stop and regard him anxiously; but Roger would at once summon all his strength and proceed again.

Soon Loches came in sight. Roger was conscious of nothing but that, amid that mass of houses, was a house that enclosed Constance. Roger could think of nothing save that, in half an hour, in a quarter of an hour, in five minutes, he would be standing face to face with her whom he had not seen for nearly three years, and from whom, during those three years, he had thought himself eternally separated.

They entered the town; they entered the street. They knocked at the convent door. The attendant opened it. Monsieur de Beuzerie asked to see his daughter, and the attendant answered in the calmest of accents, —

“Very well, monsieur le vicomte. Go into the parlor, and she will be summoned.”

The reply was very simple and very natural, yet it caused Roger to shiver. He was expecting to be told that Constance was no longer in the convent, or perhaps, as at Chinon, that Constance was dead.

They entered. A nun showed Roger and the viscount into the parlor, then left them alone.

The viscount and Roger exchanged not a word with each other; but the father drew near the grating, while the young man stood back, almost hidden in the half light.

At the end of a few moments the door opened, and Constance, dressed all in white, appeared and advanced to the grating slowly and with a foot-fall that seemed to make no sound.

She was pale and wan, but more beautiful, more graceful than ever. One would have said that all that

was earthly in her had been consumed by the fire of love, and that, of the suffering woman of this world, there remained but a blessed angel ready to wing its flight heavenward.

But suddenly, on glancing beyond her father, Constance's eye met Roger's. She faltered and uttered a loud cry. Thinking her about to fall, Roger sprang toward her, and, thrusting his arms through the grating, he cried, —

“O Constance, Constance! I know that you are an angel; but, perfect though you are, will you ever forgive me?”

“It is he!” exclaimed Constance. “It is indeed he.”

And, lifting her clasped hands to heaven, with upturned look, she said, —

“O God, I thank thee. I did well to believe. I did well to hope. He has come back to me.”

“But it is nevertheless true that he was married,” said the Vicomte de Beuzerie, wishing to prove to his daughter that he had not deceived her.

“Married!” repeated Constance. “Married! Roger, is it true?”

“Alas!” said Roger. “I was forced to yield to necessity, and here is the letter that I wrote you at the fatal date, and which my father, inspired by God, I believe, failed to deliver.”

“Then why do you come here, Roger?”

“To tell you that I am — free, and to thank you for your generous devotion.”

“Free, Roger! Did you say that you were free?”

“Yes,” murmured Roger, in a scarcely audible voice.

“Father,” cried Constance, “let me leave this place! O God, O God, I who have begged for death, wish now, dear Lord, to live. Roger is free!”

Each tender word from the girl's lips was like a dagger-thrust in Roger's heart.

He turned to Monsieur de Beuzerie, and begged for a few moments' conversation with Constance.

The old man was so rejoiced to have his daughter, whom he thought forever lost, again restored, that he instantly granted Roger's request, and even left the parlor.

The door had barely closed when Roger seized Constance's hand and covered it with kisses.

"O Constance!" he said. "I was at the mercy of an unconquerable necessity. Tell me, do you truly forgive me?"

"I forgive you, and I love you, Roger, more than ever." Then, suddenly breaking off and covering her face with her hands, she cried, —

"Oh! wretch that I am! I talk of my own happiness, Roger, and give not a thought to the soul of the poor dead woman whom I wrong, and who perhaps curses me."

Roger felt a cold chill creep through his veins, and he gave a sigh.

"You regret her, Roger," said Constance; "for undoubtedly she was beautiful, oh, more beautiful than I. That is not difficult to imagine, especially now; but oh, she did not love you as I love you. Of that I am very sure."

"No, Constance," replied Roger. "But I ought at least to observe the proprieties. A certain length of time is obligatory for mourning."

"Oh, yes, dear, yes, of course. Oh, with hope, waiting is nothing. It is the waiting in despair that kills. Now that you have come back to me after three years, I am sure of you, Roger."

And she held out her hand to him with the angelic trust that made her, all unconsciously, a woman sublime in resignation and devotion.

Just then Monsieur de Beuzerie entered. The two young people regarded each other with a smile. They had said all they had to say, and yet it had been three years since they had seen each other. But so much is contained in the three words, "I love you," that when these have been spoken, all has been said; and if one would hear something new, they must be repeated.

"Well, Constance, are you ready?" said the old man.

Constance looked at Roger, as if to ask once more whether it were indeed true that she was to leave the convent.

"Yes, monsieur," said the chevalier to the Vicomte de Beuzerie. "Yes, mademoiselle consents to give us back all the happiness of which absence from her has robbed us."

Constance pressed both hands upon her heart and drew a deep breath. Then her lovely eyes glowed with feeling, a sense of joy sent the blood to her cheeks, and she looked as radiantly beautiful as an angel.

Yet Monsieur de Beuzerie and his daughter could not leave abruptly. That step would have looked exceedingly strange. Roger, on the other hand, could not remain. He therefore saluted Monsieur de Beuzerie and Constance, whose hand he kissed a last time. And, while father and daughter were taking leave of the superior and preparing for their departure, Roger, stung with remorse, the prey of conflicting emotions, returned alone to the Château d'Anguilhem.

His mother saw him pass, his face distorted. On tiptoe she followed. She listened at the door of his room and heard him burst into sobs.

Sadly shaking her head, like a poor woman who has some foreboding of disaster, without knowing what is wrong, the dear dame returned to her chamber; and because her son was weeping, she wept.

Soon the rumor spread through the whole province that the Vicomte de Beuzerie and the Chevalier d'Anguilhem had together visited Mademoiselle Constance de Beuzerie, and, as a result of this visit, the novice had renounced her design of taking the veil, and had returned to her father's house.

In this unlooked-for return of the young girl to more mundane ideals, all thought they saw a ready solution of the differences that had formerly arisen between the two families, and which Roger's marriage had caused to spring up with intensified bitterness.

Constance herself had not a doubt of her future happiness. She had kept her faith in Roger when absent. How, then, could she bring herself to doubt him when, after three years, he had returned to her, as fond as ever?

And, in point of fact, surrounded by all the associations of his youth, Roger had reverted to his first, his only love. Now that he was again with Constance, he well knew the sentiment with which he had regarded Sylvandire to have been a very material love, a delirium of the senses, a surrender to the spell of beauty; and that love, never attaining an elevated plane, had always been love fraught with jealousy and unrest. His feeling for Constance, — it was happiness.

But his happiness was cruelly troubled by the memory of the accident at Marseilles. At times Roger succeeded in forgetting that terrible night, and then his face would lighten up with supreme joy. A smile of ineffable happiness would settle upon his lips. Then

a sudden thought would cross his mind. Roger would grow as pale as death, his flesh creep, and a cold perspiration start from every pore.

The unhappy man always saw that white fog on the horizon, with the tartan fleeing in the direction of Tunis.

As we have said, Roger had expressed to Constance the wish to appear in mourning for a year, and Constance had commended his observance of the conventionalities. Roger had not said a word of marriage. But Constance, having remained faithful to Roger in spite of his infidelity, seeing Roger return, had not thought it necessary to speak of a union which she considered as long before contracted in the sight of God. Consequently, when Roger, hoping that the distractions and the tumult of the capital might expel from his mind the terrors by which it was assailed, spoke of the necessity of a journey to Paris, on the pretext of attending to his affairs, Constance raised no objection, and merely asked when he intended to return.

"As soon as I can possibly do so," replied Roger.

And, to the confiding girl, that reply was sufficient.

Thereupon Roger took leave of the Château d'Anguilhem, of the baron, of the baroness, of the Abbé Dubuquoi, of Christopher and Castor; and, having written to the Marquis de Cretté that he would be with him in eight days, he set out, travelling by short stages.

But, after the third day, Roger could not endure the sluggish progress. It left him too much time for thought on subjects that he wished to forget. He took post-horses, and reached Paris on the fourth night after his departure.

There was yet another terrible moment for Roger.



It was when he entered his hôtel, which he had left in company with Sylvandire. He scarcely dared raise his eyes, fearing to see a light in his wife's apartment, and dreading to hear a servant say, —

"Madame returned in the absence of monsieur le chevalier, and begs that monsieur le chevalier will go to her."

But the apartment was dark and closed, and no voice was raised to speak of Sylvandire. Breton attended his master. Roger trembled in the presence of this old confidant of his jealousy. It seemed as if Breton, who knew all his grievances against Sylvandire, looked at him in a curious way which said, —

"Well, now we have taken our revenge!"

But a more trying ordeal than any of these was one that awaited Roger as he presented himself at Monsieur Bouteau's. The father-in-law's eye was searching. One is not a judge for nothing; but Roger had marshalled all his reserves for this occasion, and he bore it without flinching. The president did not love his daughter, whose character he had been able duly to estimate in the nineteen years during which he had watched over her; but to question had become a habit with him, and he would not have been averse to a petty criminal process, even in his own family. However, this time, he discovered no grounds. For why should he set about sounding the depths of that shrewd Roger, a man who, moreover, renounced his right of inheritance?

It followed that Maître Bouteau mourned with Roger the loss that both had sustained, but in such moderation that he continued to dine occasionally with his son-in-law, and they became greater friends than ever. It was the admiration of everybody that Roger's

affection, even after his wife's death, still extended to her family.

The intimacy existed three months, to the great edification of those in a position to appreciate it. But, one fine morning, while heatedly reproving a lawyer who had been too bold of speech, Maître Bouteau, a man of an irascible temperament, and possessed of a short, thick neck, fell in a fit of apoplexy, and died without recovering consciousness, an event that was not unalloyed with pleasure for Roger, nor one that would have displeased the best son-in-law in the world, who, had he been placed but twenty-four hours in Roger's position, would have understood how the worthiest of fathers-in-law can sometimes become an irksome load.

At the first news of this accident, the housekeeper, who had been with Maître Bouteau for fifteen years, hastened to summon Roger. Roger repaired to the home of his father-in-law, but, as we have said, the honored president did not regain consciousness.

The will was opened. Maître Bouteau left three hundred thousand livres to his son-in-law, five thousand livres to Mademoiselle Fanchon, his housekeeper, and one hundred thousand livres to be divided up in pious legacies among churches and hospitals.

As to cash on hand, it was out of the question. Nor was there found a single stray sou. Mademoiselle Fanchon was a systematic woman.

With all the honors due to his social position, Maître Bouteau was buried in the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise, which was beginning to be the fashionable cemetery of the day.

The hundred thousand crowns bequeathed to him by his father-in-law proved a great embarrassment to Roger.

The money weighed upon him singularly. It was Sylvandire's inheritance; but how was he to get the money to her? There was the rub! Besides, with that amount, Sylvandire could ransom herself and return to France. Roger trembled at the thought.

He resolved, nevertheless, to hold that sum always available in bonds payable to the bearer.

Let us turn from Maître Bouteau, of whom we are glad to be rid, to the Marquis de Cretté, with whom, thank God, we have not yet done.

If Maître Bouteau had had a germ of suspicion, in Cretté the germ had attained full growth; but he was that rare combination, a courtier and a man of delicacy. Moreover, he loved Roger as he would have loved a brother. Hence he asked his friend no questions about his wife; but, in the course of conversation and parenthetically, he said, —

"By the way, my friend, you know I had an old account to settle with Royancourt."

"Yes," said Roger.

"Well, knowing that you must not be implicated, I went to look him up at Utrecht, and there I publicly trod on his toes in such a fashion that I at last got him to fight."

"Well?" demanded Roger.

"I gave him a pretty little sword-thrust in the abdomen."

"You have killed him then?"

"No, not exactly. He is just now in the hands of an excellent surgeon. Yet, as the wound was serious, I doubt that he will survive the winter. Do not be too grievously afflicted if you learn at any moment that he has passed from here to the hereafter."

In fact, one morning they read in the "Holland

Gazette," the following notice, under the heading of Amsterdam, March, 1714: —

"Monsieur le Marquis de Royancourt died this morning from the effects of a wound received while hunting. This gentleman came to us eight months ago, charged with a special commission from His Most Christian Majesty."

"Come, come," thought Roger. "It looks as if God must be watching over honest men, after all, since He is ridding me of all my persecutors one after another. Indeed, the proverb is right that says, 'God helps those who help themselves!'"

It was Cretté that showed Roger the death notice.

"Your prison debts are paid," he remarked when the chevalier had read the article in question. "I have discharged one, and you have discharged —"

But Roger turned so pale that Cretté broke off abruptly, and, holding out his hand to his friend, said, —

"Forgive me, chevalier. I am not prying into your secrets. But you know that if those secrets were of such a nature as to compromise you any day, you will find me in the future what you have found me in the past."

Roger pressed the hand of the marquis and heaved a great sigh; but he made no other response.

This caused the marquis to understand that the matter was very serious.

Then Cretté fell back upon his usual advice, — distraction; and, knowing no greater distraction than that afforded by a mistress, Cretté advised Roger to take Mademoiselle Poussette, were it only for a short time. The matter would be very simple, as she was just then solacing Chastellux, who, having also suffered severely

through his affections, had also been in need of consolation.

But Roger answered that his own sorrows were incurable.

Cretté saw that he must leave it all to time.

However, as time wrought no change in Roger's melancholy, and as, on the contrary, it became more and more deep-seated, Cretté concerted with his friends to procure him some diversion from time to time, and in spite of himself, as it were; but the diversion almost always had a different result from what that excellent friend intended.

Thus, one day when d'Herbigny had persuaded Roger to ride with him to Saint Cloud, and being convinced that Roger's decline proceeded from grief at the death of his wife, as a lady passed them in an open barouche, d'Herbigny remarked, —

“ Ah! that lady looks like poor Sylvandire ! ”

Then, as he turned to observe the effect of his sympathetic words, he beheld Roger gripping the saddle with both hands, wild-eyed, and as pale as death.

“ What a weakness he had for that woman ! ” said d'Herbigny to himself, as he shook his head. “ Really, it is of no use; he will never get over it. ”

And he brought Roger, more dead than alive, back to his hôtel.

On another occasion, when Roger, d'Herbigny, Cretté, and Chastellux had all four dined together, Chastellux proposed to his friends that they go to the Comédie-Française, of which he was a constant frequenter, in consequence of his connection with Mademoiselle Poussette. Cretté and d'Herbigny accepted, in the hope of amusing Roger. Roger accepted without knowing what was proposed.

"Phèdre," which was beginning to find favor with the public, was being played, and "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac," which then, as now, was privileged to excite the audience to the highest pitch of hilarity. Roger, all the time plunged in reverie, had listened to "Phèdre" without hearing it, yet he was beginning to be somewhat diverted by the comedy, when they came to the scene where the two lawyers sing to the unhappy Limosin spouse, accused of having taken two wives:—

"Polygamy's a hanging matter."

Now this scene, which threw the people into spasms of delight, had a wholly contrary effect upon d'Anguilhem. He uttered several inarticulate sounds which his friends took for laughter. Then, throwing himself backward, he fell fainting into Cretté's arms.

They carried him back to the hôtel, very ill, and all through the night he was delirious.

Cretté had the forethought to send every one away, and he watched alone beside him.

On the next day the Marquis de Cretté seemed almost as care-ridden as his friend, who very soon rallied from this attack, although at the same time falling into a despondency that deepened day by day.

## XXIX.

HOW THE PERSIAN AMBASSADOR, MEHEMET RIZA BEG, CAME TO PARIS TO PRESENT THE RESPECTFUL COMPLIMENTS OF HIS SOVEREIGN TO LOUIS XIV., AND HOW THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM WAS CONSTRAINED TO PAY A VISIT TO THAT ILLUSTRIOUS PERSONAGE.

WHAT rendered Roger more and more melancholy was the fact that time was passing with frightful rapidity, and that of the year required for mourning already nine months were gone.

As we have seen, Roger had not, strictly speaking, made Constance any promise; but it was evident that Constance was in no need of promises from Roger to regard their union as a settled thing. From the moment that Roger had gone to beg her to withdraw from the convent and she had agreed to return to the world, there had been a tacit understanding that she was to become Roger's wife. Besides, everybody thought so, — the viscount, the viscountess, the baron and the baroness, the neighbors, all, in short, that had known of the old love affair between Roger and Constance, and had heard the news of their recent engagement.

Then, let us add, Roger himself loved Constance more than he had ever loved her. Every other day he received a letter from the maiden, and every letter was a new leaf from the book of her heart, where Roger read the promise of ineffable joy. The situation was a

terrible one. Fear held Roger back. Love urged him on. His union with Constance presented two faces, the one happily smiling, the other deathly sad.

Twenty times Roger was on the point of setting out for Anguilhem to confess everything to his father and to Constance; but as Minerva restrained Achilles, so Roger's good genius restrained him.

At last, urged on by all, driven to his last entrenchment, and at his wits' end after another delay of six months, he pledged his word for the beginning of December, 1714. Then he affected to fall ill, hoping to die; and finally, he fixed positively upon the month of February, 1715.

Any excuses sufficed to Constance, who did not even question them. All delays she had accepted with saintly resignation. In the interval, also, she had lost her mother, and she too was wearing deep mourning.

It had been decided that the wedding should take place in Paris, and eight days before its celebration the baron and the baroness established themselves in the Hôtel d'Anguilhem, while the Vicomte de Beuzerie and his daughter stayed at a neighboring house, where Roger had provided for their entertainment.

At the Hôtel d'Anguilhem all had been changed: furniture, hangings, pictures, everything, even to the mirrors. Roger would have regarded it as profanation that Constance should make use of any article whatever that might have belonged to Sylvandire.

It will be remembered that Roger had sent his mother her share of the diamonds left by Monsieur de Bouzenois. These were the baroness' wedding present to her daughter-in-law.

Now, the approaching marriage of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem made a great stir in society. People



talked only of that and of the arrival of the Persian ambassador, Mehemet Riza Beg, who had, as we have said, arrived at the capital, as the bearer of gifts from his sovereign to Louis XIV. The ladies called on the ambassador in the afternoon, and the gentlemen in the morning.

One word about this singular personage, who, although introduced in our story a little later on, nevertheless requires especial mention.

Mehemet Riza Beg, as we have said, was the personage who, for the time being, divided popular attention with the Chevalier d'Anguilhem. However, with the modesty of which in the course of this most veracious history we have given so many proofs, we must admit that only a certain circle of Parisian society was interested in Roger, while Mehemet Riza Beg was the theme of all France.

In fact, since the year 807, when Abdallah was despatched on an embassy by Haroun, the ruler of Persia, to Charlemagne, the Emperor of the West, and who brought from his sovereign a live elephant, which was regarded as a great wonder, our succeeding sovereigns had never received any direct communication from the land of the "Arabian Nights" until about the middle of the year 1714, when the news was spread that Hussein, the Shah of Persia, grandson of the great Sephi, and son of the Sultan Soliman, having heard the virtues of the great King Louis XIV., extolled even in Ispahan, his capital, had resolved to despatch an ambassador to him with presents. This news, as yet unconfirmed, had seemed singularly to flatter the pride of the conqueror of Flanders; and as if Providence was willing to offer an indemnity to his vanity at the moment of reminding him of the nothingness of human

grandeur, the news came that Mehemet Riza Beg had disembarked at Marseilles.

Great news for Versailles was the ambassador's arrival! The old king, grievously tormented by his circle of bastards, stricken by the hand of God in the persons of his sons and grandsons, was becoming more sullen than ever, so much so, that Madame de Maintenon, although a woman of resources, complained to her confidantes of the terrible task she had undertaken of amusing a man the most difficult to amuse of all, not only in France and Navarre, but in the whole of Europe.

Mehemet Riza Beg was coming, then, it would appear, in the very nick of time to galvanize, as we nowadays say, the great sepulchre, as Versailles was called, and the great cadaver, as they called Louis XIV.

Also there were people who said under their breaths that Mehemet Riza Beg was not an ambassador of Hussein, the Shah of Persia, but of Madame de Maintenon, the anonymous queen of France.

However that might have been, and whencesoever he may have come, Mehemet Riza Beg had been received with great pomp. It was barely learned that he had landed at Marseilles, when the king sent Monsieur de Saint-Olon, his ambassador, to the King of Morocco, to receive him. In fact, the honors due to special envoys were rendered to Mehemet Riza Beg, who reached Charenton on the twenty-sixth of January, made his entry into the capital on the seventh of the following February, and was admitted to a formal audience on the nineteenth of the same month.

Now, as we have intimated, the ambassador was the lion of the day. Nothing was talked of but his grandeur, his peculiarities, and the anxiety to which his capricious whims subjected the Baron de Breteuil,

commissioned by the great king to entertain this envoy doubly-extraordinary sent him by his brother, the Shah of Persia.

It was therefore quite natural that, having seen Paris and Versailles, Monsieur de Beuzerie and his daughter should request to see the ambassador.

Roger, who was growing more cheerful with the approach of his new happiness, saw no reason for denying his fiancée a gratification so small.

Consequently, as the nuptial blessing was to be pronounced at noon, and as nothing is more tedious to a newly married couple than the wedding day, during which they are obliged to receive the congratulations of parents and friends, it was decided to make the proposed visit to the said ambassador between the ceremony and the dinner.

The twenty-sixth of February was the day appointed for the union of Constance and the chevalier. By hardily confronting that moment so solemn to all, and so terrible to him, Roger had ended, not by forgetting the position in which this second marriage was placing him, but by disregarding it.

In brief, he was like one who had offered his life as a sacrifice, who knew that at any moment it might be taken, but who, meanwhile, was resolved to enjoy to the utmost the days that were left.

Since morning Roger had surrendered to the intoxicating delight of beholding Constance again. In gazing upon her all else was forgotten.

On emerging from Saint Roch, where the marriage had been celebrated, her attendants escorted Constance to her apartments for the purpose of exchanging her bridal attire, and Roger and Cretté took their way to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, where Mehemet Riza Beg was

installed in state. Gentlemen, as we have said, were received in the morning, and ladies in the afternoon.

The Marquis de Cretté was acquainted with the Baron de Breteuil, and had secured letters from him.

Thanks to their letters, they were at once ushered into the presence of His Excellency. There was a throng of visitors, and they passed in groups of four in front of the ambassador, who, seated on a mat in the middle of his salon, gravely bowed as they passed. The names of the visitors were announced as they were successively admitted.

When the turn of the friends came, the Marquis de Cretté and the Chevalier d'Anguilhem were announced as the others had been.

Riza Beg was at that moment engaged in smoking, or rather, a slave, kneeling before him, was in the act of lighting his pipe.

Roger observed that the slave, whose back alone could be seen, had a comely figure.

On hearing the names of the Marquis de Cretté and the Chevalier d'Anguilhem, the ambassador started, and the slave turned.

Having already advanced four steps into the room, the two gentlemen stopped short and looked at each other, pale and motionless, as if the slave's face, like the head of Medusa, had turned them to stone; and then, after a moment of bewilderment, they took one another by the hand, saluted, and withdrew backward out of the salon, without having even glanced at the ambassador.

"O Roger!" exclaimed the marquis, on reaching the antechamber, "what a resemblance!"

"Cretté," replied d'Anguilhem, "it is no resemblance. It is Sylvandire herself, and I am lost!"

Then, in few words, he related his story to the marquis. However, he had left himself but little to tell. During the night of his delirium he had revealed nearly everything.

"In that case," cried Cretté, "you must flee at once. Quickly secure all your gold and diamonds, and start for Flanders, Holland, or England. Go to the ends of the earth, but go at once."

Roger did not move from the spot.

"But how does she happen to be with this beast of an ambassador?" said Cretté.

"Who can fathom God's designs?" gloomily returned Roger.

"Come, come!" cried the marquis, hurrying him along. "No theology. Don't lose a second. Send for post-horses, get a carriage, and be off!"

"Without Constance? Never! never!"

"But, my dear friend, do you know to what you are exposing yourself?"

"To death, I know; but what matters death, provided I do not die until to-morrow?"

"Permit me to say that your reasoning is perfectly absurd. To-morrow, my dear friend, you will, I hope, have still less desire to die than you have to-day. You must live, *morbleu!* and live a long time. So leave to-day, this very instant. Only tell me where you are going, and to-morrow or to-night I will send you your wife. I will take her, if necessary, to you wherever you are, and once together, you will forget the ambassador. You will forget Sylvandire; you will forget the universe."

"No, Cretté, no. Abandon me; you see, indeed, that I bring only misfortune!"

"Oh! if you lose your head, chevalier, that will

really be past endurance. Why, do you wish to be the laughing-stock of all France? Do you wish — *Diable!* bear in mind the gallows of Monsieur de Pourceaugnac. Apropos, was that the reason — ”

“ Alas! yes, my friend.”

“ Poor fellow! But I urge you again to make up your mind, Roger. *Peste!* the king makes no joke of morals. Remember For-l'Évêque, the Bastille, Châlon-sur-Saône. Fifteen months' imprisonment for neglecting your wife. Then what would it be for selling her? ”

Arguing thus, they arrived at the Hôtel d'Anguilhem. Constance had gone with the baroness and her young friends to pay her call at the ambassador's.

Cretté profited by the opportunity to urge Roger to action. Roger had nearly thirty thousand francs in his coffer, and diamonds to the value of two hundred thousand francs. It was more than enough for immediate needs. He had therefore almost decided to flee, when all the ladies returned. In consequence of one of Mehemet Riza Beg's caprices, the doors of the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs had been suddenly closed, and the reception postponed until five o'clock in the evening.

The sight of Constance produced its effect. Roger possessed neither the strength to fly, nor the courage to reveal the situation. Dinner was announced. Mechanically, Roger followed his guests and took his place at the table in such a state of preoccupation that it was observed by all.

But, on his wedding day the head of a newly-married man may be a prey to thoughts of such conflicting nature that none would be indiscreet enough to ask him of what he was thinking. Yet from time to time Constance

regarded him with misgiving, and at the least sound d'Anguilhem and Cretté would give a start and turn their eyes upon the door.

In this manner the dessert was reached. Roger and Cretté began to be somewhat reassured. Roger smiled upon his bride, and his smile was life to her. With the charming high-bred manner that so few people have preserved in these days, Cretté was telling some of the anecdotes that no one dares tell any more, when suddenly a hideous looking negro boy entered and asked for Monsieur le Baron d'Anguilhem.

Monsieur d'Anguilhem *père* had already risen, when Roger, comprehending that he was the one to whom the summons was addressed, made a sign to his father to be seated again, and, with blanched countenance, he himself followed the negro.

Without strength to ask his guide a single question, Roger descended the stairs. Besides, if any doubt had remained to him, the matter would have been promptly explained. In the centre of the court he saw a two-seated chaise, and in the chaise, on the farther side, sat the young slave that he had recognized in the morning, and whose recognition had given him such a terrible turn.

The slave made a sign for Roger to enter the chaise and take the opposite seat.

Roger obeyed without a word, and sat down before her. The husband and wife of other days confronted each other.

"At last, dear Roger," said Sylvandire, "after many difficulties, I see you again, thank God!"

Roger bowed.

"You did not count on me as a guest to-day, did you?" proceeded Sylvandire, deriving from Roger the

same pleasure that a cat has in playing with a mouse before eating it.

"No, I confess I did not," returned Roger.

"No. You thought me at Constantinople, at Cairo, or at Tripoli at the very least. But I loved you so much, my dear, that I could not endure absence from you, and I eagerly seized upon the first opportunity presenting itself to return to Europe."

"Excessively kind," muttered Roger.

"But how has my love been rewarded? I come, I inquire about you. I am told that you are about to take another wife, and that to-day, to-day even, you are married; but understand that I am jealous, — ingrate!"

Every one of her words froze poor Roger. Finally, after a moment's silence, during which Sylvandire not once took her eyes from his, Roger asked, —

"But what do you wish of me now?"

"I wish to know at what price you sold me, that I may add the sum to the other small claims that I have against you."

"*Ma foi*," said Roger, "all things considered, I was justified in selling a wife that had caused me to be imprisoned."

"I ought to have done worse than that, miscreant that you are," answered Sylvandire in purring tones.

"Had me killed, perhaps? Ah! indeed, madame, had you done that, you would, I admit, have rendered me a valuable service."

"Listen," said Sylvandire. "A truce to jesting, and let us talk business."

"With all my heart," replied Roger. "But I swear that for my part I am neither jesting nor in the least disposed to jest. Therefore speak as seriously as you will, I listen."



"Roger," resumed Sylvandire, "without a suspicion of it, you have created my happiness. I became acquainted with Mehemet Riza Beg; I pleased him, and he has made me his wife."

"What!" exclaimed Roger with a ray of hope, "and you too are married?"

"Yes, but in the Mohammedan way, which does very well for that country, but which would certainly be worth nothing here. So that I have really only one husband, while you have two wives. Now, you know, my dear husband, polygamy is —"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Roger.

"You are, therefore, nicely caught, completely in my power, for I waited until the thing was done, you understand; and in any case, even though you had not politely come and made me a call this morning, you would have had mine this evening."

"Why, would you ruin me?" cried Roger.

"Fool! What would I gain by ruining you? No, no, dear Roger. In the first place, I wish you to give me the hundred thousand crowns that you have inherited from my poor father."

"Oh! as to that," cried Roger, "it is no more than just, and I have kept the sum in bonds payable to bearer, all ready to be sent to you."

And Roger moved as if to descend from the carriage and go for his portfolio.

But Sylvandire checked him.

"Not so fast, now, not so fast," said Sylvandire. "Oh! that is not all. You are not to be let off so cheaply."

"I am waiting," said Roger.

"Next, the one hundred thousand crowns of my *dot*."

"What! your *dot*? You know very well that I never received any one hundred thousand crowns."

"I know that sum is specified in my marriage contract, and that I must not wrong my second husband, whose behavior, you will acknowledge, has been very different from yours, since he bought me, and you — you sold me."

"Very well," said Roger, "as you will, the one hundred thousand crowns shall be yours."

"Next," began Sylvandire.

"What!" cried Roger, "is there anything more?"

"Certainly, there is the price of my person. *Diable!* my dear Roger, if not of age, I was at least emancipated, and I owned an interest in myself. I am not a lawyer's daughter for nothing."

"As to that," said Roger, "I can give you my word of honor that I did not receive a sou, and I even — I even — well, I gave five hundred pistoles to boot."

"Oh! it is ungallant of you to tell me that, monsieur," coquettishly protested Sylvandire. "But as you are a man of honor, and as you give me your word, I believe you. So, if you like, it shall be six hundred thousand livres."

"When do you wish the money?" asked Roger.

"I had a great mind, however," continued Sylvandire, without replying to the question, "I had a great mind to appear in the salon in place of staying in the court, and be suddenly announced by the faithful Breton. You still have Breton?"

Roger bowed affirmatively.

"And have the faithful Breton suddenly announce Madame d'Anguilhem, just to see your look of consternation at finding yourself between your two wives, Turk that you are! But I preferred other satisfaction."

As I said, give me six hundred thousand livres, and then we shall see."

"Where do you wish me to send this sum?" asked Roger.

"To the embassy," replied Sylvandire. "Ask for the favorite slave of His Excellency, Mehemet Riza Beg. I shall know what that means, and will respond to the call."

"And when must you have the six hundred thousand livres?" demanded Roger, repeating the question that had remained unanswered.

"In two hours."

"In two hours!" exclaimed Roger. "Why, you might as well ask me at once to blow out my brains. How do you expect me to get one hundred thousand crowns together in two hours?"

"Why, you have diamonds, sell them. You have friends, draw on their purses. I am sorry to seem so unreasonable, but we are leaving very shortly, my dear Roger. His Excellency, Mehemet Riza Beg, has remained solely at my request that he would wait until your marriage was solemnized."

"In two hours! in two hours!" cried Roger. "Why it is impossible. Wait at least until to-morrow morning."

"I will not wait a moment."

"Then do your worst."

"My worst, oh! *mon Dieu*, that is simple enough. I will enter the hôtel, go to your room, get into bed, and wait till you come. Angola," pursued Sylvandire, addressing the negro, and making a movement as if to get out, "open the door, I wish to descend."

The negro grasped the door-knob. Roger detained Sylvandire.

"But think of the consequences."

"There are no consequences, save only for you. Mehemet has no claim on me but that of having bought me. Now, I suspect that such a sale is decidedly illegal in France. Besides, it was you that sold me. It would come with a bad grace for you to reproach me with what happened while I was in the hands of my owner."

"But, madame —"

"Listen," said Sylvandire. "I have said that I would give you two hours, and, as I am as good as my word, I still grant them; but if, in two hours — heed me well —"

"Oh! I am not losing a word," returned Roger with a sigh.

"If in two hours the six hundred thousand livres have not reached the hôtel of the embassy —"

"Well?" demanded Roger, anxiously.

"Well, dear Roger," replied Sylvandire, "expect to hear Madame Roger d'Anguilhem announced, and to see me appear."

So saying, Sylvandire dismissed her husband with a captivating little nod and an adorable smile. Then, at a sign from his mistress, the negro opened the carriage door, and Roger alighted.

The carriage immediately began to move away; but as far as the grand entrance, Sylvandire, her head entirely out of the window, continued waving her hand to Roger.

## XXX.

HOW THE MARQUIS DE CRETTE NEGOTIATED MATTERS  
IN THE NAME OF THE CHEVALIER D'ANGUILHEM,  
AND BROUGHT THIS ENTIRE STORY TO A MOST  
UNEXPECTED ISSUE.

ROGER found Cretté waiting for him at the foot of the staircase.

"Well?" interrogated the marquis.

"Well, my friend, it was she!"

"I suspected as much. What does she want? What does she demand?"

"An impossibility."

"But what?"

"Six hundred thousand livres in two hours."

"Six hundred thousand livres in two hours!" repeated Cretté, "excellent!"

"Excellent! what do you mean? Why I have only three hundred thousand livres in hand, and, in two hours from now, if I have not found three hundred thousand more, which is impossible —"

"Well, if you have not the other three hundred thousand, what then?"

"She will come to the hôtel and have herself publicly announced as Madame Roger d'Anguilhem."

"She will not do it."

"Why?"

"I don't know why; but if she could do it she would have done it."

"Ah! my friend."

"Listen, Roger: when people demand money and fail to take their rights, they are in hiding; there is something back of it all."

"But, my friend, she is not in hiding, since she tells me that in two hours she will announce herself in my house as my wife."

"Yes, I know, it is alarming."

"My dear fellow, I shall go to my room and blow my brains out."

"There is time enough for that yet; leave things to me."

"But what can you do?"

"I do not know, but I shall try to save you."

"Oh! my dear Cretté, my only friend!" cried Roger, casting his arms around the marquis' neck.

"Yes, yes, I understand all that," returned Cretté; "but we must not waste our time weeping in each other's arms."

"What must I do? I place myself in your hands; command and I will obey."

"Detain your guests in the salon; it is only half-past eight, that will be an easy matter, therefore. Look as cheerful as you can, — I will not be too exacting, poor fellow. Prevent any one's entering the salon without Breton's knowledge."

"I will station him at the door."

"Now, give me the three hundred thousand livres that are payable to bearer, all your jewels, and the cash that you have. I will go to my notary and drain his purse. The devil is in it if we do not get the requisite sum."

"Yes, yes, Cretté, get me the money, sell everything, save me."

And Roger ascended the stairs with his friend, got the

three hundred thousand livres, went with him to Constance's chamber and took all the diamonds that he had given to his wife. Then, Cretté, leaping into the carriage which had been ordered in the meantime, dashed away with his horses at full speed.

Roger went back to the salon, and as Cretté had directed, he put on as good a face as he was able.

Meanwhile, Cretté hastened home and secured twenty-five thousand livres; he proceeded thence to his notary, who gave him fifty thousand. These sums, with the thirty thousand livres in cash that Roger had given him, and the diamonds rated at their inventory value, almost made up the six hundred thousand livres demanded.

All this chasing about had consumed an hour and a half. Hence there was no time to lose.

On leaving his notary, Cretté gave orders to proceed to the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs.

Five minutes later, he alighted at the door.

He ascended the stairs. Thanks to the change made in the hour of their reception, the ladies were descending.

He encountered Mademoiselle Poussette, who had just made her call, and, who, with peals of laughter, was returning to her carriage.

Cretté, fearing that she would cause him to lose valuable time, endeavored to avoid her, but it was not to be done. Mademoiselle Poussette had seen him; overcome with laughter she permitted herself to sink into his arms.

"Well! let us hear what has happened," demanded Cretté. "Why are you laughing so, mademoiselle?"

"Ah! my dear marquis," cried Mademoiselle Poussette, "the queerest adventure, the most unheard-of, most unexpected, most mythological, most fabulous!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" thought Cretté, "can she by any chance have recognized Sylvandire?"

"An adventure such as one meets with in stories, in fairy-tales, in the 'Arabian Nights,' an adventure that you will not believe."

"Certainly, certainly!" cried Cretté, "of course I shall believe you; but talk fast, my love, as I am pressed for time."

"You are going up to the ambassador?"

"Yes."

"Then look at him well and squarely in the face, as I am looking at you this moment; in imagination, divest him of his beard, of his mustache, and then come to see me to-morrow morning, that is all I have to say; or this very evening, if you prefer it, monsieur le marquis," added she, with a little squeeze of the hand and a most gracious smile.

"What!" exclaimed Cretté, "I am to look the ambassador well and squarely in the face, divest him of beard and mustache? Poussette, my dear friend, do you happen to know the ambassador?"

"Do I know him! — as well as I know you, as well as I know d'Herbigny, as well as I know Chastellux, as well as I should probably have known your friend Roger, had he not always proved cruel."

"Poussette, my dear child," cried the marquis, "you can save my life."

"Your life, marquis?"

"No, not exactly mine, but my best friend's which is absolutely the same thing — Roger's."

"What must I do?"

"Who is this ambassador? His name, Poussette, his name! Twenty thousand livres and the good graces of the handsomest gentleman in Paris. I pledge my word for him; if he fails to pay, I will pay. Poussette, my dear girl, what is the ambassador's name?"



"Ah! for shame! you think me selfish, marquis, you deserve indeed —"

"His name, Poussette! and by midnight I will bring you the twenty thousand livres; expect me."

"Well, marquis, it is — you will never believe it."

"Go on. I invariably believe what women tell me."

"It is —"

"Poussette, you torture me!"

"Well, it is the Indian."

"What Indian?"

"Why, the Indian, you know, my yellow lover."

"Roger's opponent? that man of the lawsuit? Afghano?" cried the marquis.

"Himself."

"Ah! Poussette of my heart, come to my arms!"

And, heedless of being seen by the people that continued to descend from the ambassador's, Cretté folded the demoiselle to his heart.

"But are you quite positive?" continued he, unable to credit such good news.

"I tell you that I recognized him in spite of the beard that he has grown, in spite of his blackened teeth, in spite of his pink-tinted nails, and yet the monster made believe not to see me! Ah! marquis, marquis, how ungrateful men are!"

"My dear Poussette," said Cretté, "I will be proof to the contrary. I shall be with you at midnight; expect me to supper."

"And if Chastellux comes?"

"You will say that you have a headache."

"How you arrange things, monsieur le marquis!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Poussette, endeavoring to blush.

"Not so well as you, I know, my Venus; besides, I rely entirely on your sagacity. Adieu, Poussette, and if

you have told the truth, well, you have rendered me a service that I will never in my life forget."

Mademoiselle Poussette regained her carriage, and Cretté mounted the stairs four steps at a time. At the ambassador's door he was stopped by the negro.

"What do you want?" said he. "His Excellency's reception for gentlemen is over."

"I am not seeking His Excellency," returned Cretté, "but his favorite slave."

"Then you come —"

"On behalf of the Chevalier d'Anguilhem."

"In that case, enter."

And the negro ushered Cretté into a room furnished in the style of the Orient; then, saying that he would acquaint the person whom the marquis sought he left him.

And five minutes later Sylvandire entered.

"Ah! it is you, monsieur le marquis," said Sylvandire. "I had a presentiment that I was about to have the pleasure of meeting you again. My presentiment was not at fault. Have you the six hundred thousand livres?"

"No," boldly answered the marquis.

"Then why are you here?"

"To speak with your master, His Excellency Mehemet Riza Beg."

"From whom, seigneur?" asked Sylvandire, lightly.

"From Monsieur Voyer d'Argenson, lieutenant of the police of the realm."

Sylvandire paled; Cretté noted the effect of his words.

"His Excellency cannot receive at present; he is in bed."

"Well," said Cretté, "I will go and find some one that will make him get up."

"Stay," said Sylvandire. "I will see if His Excellency is visible."

"Pardon, fair lady," said Cretté, "but I have reasons of my own for wishing to accompany you, otherwise —" He made a step toward the door.

"Come with me," said Sylvandire.

And she opened a door that led into a corridor.

The marquis followed, and with her penetrated to the salon of the ambassador, who, seated on his mat, assumed an air of lordly consequence that was ridiculous in the extreme.

"Wait," said Sylvandire, "I will summon the interpreter."

"It is quite unnecessary," remarked Cretté.

"What! do you, then, know Persian, marquis?"

"No; but His Excellency will be so kind as to speak French."

"He has no knowledge of our language."

"Do you think so?" said Cretté.

Then, approaching the ambassador and tapping him on the shoulder, he said,—

"Am I not right, my dear Monsieur Afghano, in supposing that, in my case, you will have the extreme goodness to remember that you speak French?"

The ambassador uncrossed his legs, threw back one hand as a support, and, with blanched face, stared at Cretté.

"Oho!" said Cretté. "My dear monsieur, had I thought the face of an old acquaintance could produce this effect, I would have instructed madame to prepare you."

"What do you wish, monsieur?" said the Indian.

"There, you see," said Cretté to Sylvandire. "I told you that His Excellency would make an exception in my

favor! I wish, dear Monsieur Afghano," resumed Cretté, again turning to the false ambassador, "to notify you that within one hour a warning will have been sent to the king whom you have mystified, that he has been made your dupe."

The Indian became livid, and his hand stole toward his poniard.

"There? there!" said Cretté, "no tragedy, I beg, dear Monsieur Afghano, it would be useless; for I warn you that I am seconded by one who knows your whole history, and who will in one hour start for Versailles, if in that time I do not return to the hôtel. However, my dear friend, don't let that hinder you; kill me if you like. I have never been able to distinguish myself, and by such a death I should be almost immortalized. The Marquis de Cretté killed by His Excellency, Mehemet Riza Beg, Ambassador Extraordinary of His Most Sublime Majesty, the Shah of Persia. *Diable!* I should be in great luck. But no: you lay your weapons aside; you return to more pacific ideas. Well, so be it, I am myself a good-natured fellow; whatever suits you suits me. Let us talk business."

The ambassador arose and went himself to bolt the door.

"Yes, I understand," continued Cretté. "You purchased madame, and you have a good bargain, for madame is charming. You then formed each other's acquaintance, which is quite natural; on acquaintance you discovered that you each had a grievance against the same man,—against poor Roger. You then said: 'Very well, since we have a hatred in common, let us have our revenge in common.' Meanwhile, the report reached you that no one could any longer amuse the king, and, being a man of inventive turn, you improvised this embassy. Bravo!

my dear fellow, bravo! There was everything to gain; you pocketed the presents that His Very Christian Majesty had the kindness to grant you in exchange for the baubles that you brought him from your sovereign, for whom, by the way, you have secured the reputation of a niggard. As for my lady, her thoughts ran something like this: 'I shall make him surrender my father's inheritance' — which is just — 'and my *dot*,' — which is much less just, since madame never had a *dot*. With these ends in view, you come to Paris, and fortune favors you beyond expectation. You learn that Monsieur d'Anguilhem is about to marry, and you wait until the marriage has taken place. Then when the deed is done, when there is no retreat, you immediately begin to work the gold mine that has just been opened up before you. And so, you at first extract six hundred thousand livres through dread of the rope that hangs from the neck of a bigamist. But this is not all: after this demand comes another, and this other is followed by still another. During your entire life, you haunt the shadow of this blessed gibbet, fleecing the chevalier until the inheritance from Monsieur Bouzenois gradually reverts to the hands of Monsieur Afghano. I think I have stated the case accurately, have I not, Monsieur Afghano? have I not, madame?" continued Cretté, alternately casting upon each a glance that was half of amusement, half menace. "*Diable!* we are French, and, consequently, born wicked, says Monsieur Boileau-Despreaux, whom madame must have read in her youth."

Sylvandire and Afghano were crushed, and they cowered before Cretté like two criminals before their judge.

"Ah! and now," continued Cretté, "as the position of each is clear, the chevalier can be hanged for bigamy, Monsieur Afghano can be quartered for forgery, Madame

Sylvandire can be sent to Saint Lazare as an adventuress. Let us come to the point.

"You have received a million, or thereabout, from the King of France, my dear Monsieur Afghano. In this portfolio are three hundred thousand livres, your father's bequest, my dear Dame d'Anguilhem. You, Monsieur l'Indien, have nearly two million of your own; altogether that makes, according to my reckoning, three million three hundred thousand livres: a very pretty penny with which to retire to Tripoli, to Constantinople, to Cairo, to Ispahan, to Pekin, to any place you wish, in short, and to lead the life of a sultan everywhere."

"Monsieur le marquis," said Afghano, "I swear I will start to-morrow."

"Not so fast, not so fast! I intend that you shall start; but on two slight conditions that I am about to name."

"Speak, monsieur, I listen."

"Monsieur, do you swear never again to return to Paris?"

"I swear it."

"I believe you, for your oath is vouched for by your fear of discovery. I will ask no other security than your word, and I am quite sure that I shall never see you again."

The Indian inclined his head.

"But that is not the case with madame. Let her once be separated from you, let you once go away, as soon as I can no longer prove you an impostor and madame your accomplice, madame might any day be seized with a desire to return and seat herself at the conjugal fireside, which would embarrass us greatly, since at this fireside there is room only for two. Therefore I shall not leave myself at the mercy of madame's word. Madame shall

give me a little letter, which I will dictate myself, and, when I have that letter in my hands, why, madame may follow you to the ends of the earth."

Sylvandire rebelled.

"You must," said Cretté. "It is hard, I admit, to have come to lay down the law and to have it dealt out instead; this is a condition *sine quâ non*."

"And if I refuse?"

"On leaving here, I shall go to the chief of police. I shall expose your little fraud, and in half an hour you will be in the Bastile."

"But," said Sylvandire, "we are not friendless, monsieur le marquis; we did not come here without having taken precautions. We have powerful allies."

"As Monsieur de Royancourt cannot be in question, since I have had the honor to run my sword through his body, I presume that you have reference to the Jesuits."

"Possibly."

"Alas, my dear Madame d'Anguilhem, although you have had some slight association with those gentlemen, you do not yet know them. You would compromise them outrageously by making use of their name. They are not simpletons, they would sacrifice you."

"It is true, it is only too true!" murmured Afghano.

"In that case," said Sylvandire, "what must I do?"

"What monsieur le marquis exacts, my dear," replied the Indian; "believe me, it is our wisest plan."

"But, if I give you this letter, will you swear that you will let us and our money leave France unmolested?"

"I give you my word of honor on it, I, Alphonse, Marquis de Cretté."

"I am ready, monsieur," said Sylvandire, seating herself at a table on which there were paper, ink, and pens.

"Dictate; I will write."

Crette dictated:—

“TUNIS, Oct. 11, 1713.

“MONSIEUR D’ANGUILHEM, — Cease grieving for my death, for I am told that your whole life is wrecked. I live. Although I fell into the sea, although I seemed to be drowned, it was a subterfuge to rid myself of the dominion of a husband whom, despite all his attentions, I could not bring myself to love, and in order, at last, to reach the arms of the man whom I adore. To-day, monsieur, under other laws, human and divine, I have become his wife, and you will never see me again. Dead to all, I wish to be especially so to you. Therefore, from this day, consider yourself wholly widowed and also perfectly free.

“And now, that you may be as happy as I am, is the last wish for us both of her who once was

“SYLVANDIRE, DAME D’ANGUILHEM.

“P. S. This letter will be conveyed to you by a trustworthy man whom my husband is despatching to France.”

“How can this letter serve you?” inquired Sylvandire, as she handed it to the marquis, after having addressed and sealed it.

“That, madame, you will learn, should you, failing to keep your word, ever force us to make use of it.”

And, bowing to Afghano and to Sylvandire, he proceeded to the door, which he opened, and at its threshold said to the ambassador, loud enough to be heard by his people, —

“Deign, Your Excellency, to accept my sincere compliments.”

Afghano, wholly prostrated by the scene that had just taken place, remained where he was. But Sylvandire followed Crette.

“Marquis,” she said, in a low voice as she crossed the antechamber with him, “tell me frankly, is his wife pretty?”



"Not so pretty as you, madame," replied Cretté, "but she loves him more."

"What would you have?" retorted Sylvandire. "I wished to be a princess."

"Another marriage like this one, madame," said Cretté, "and you will attain your end; you are already an ambassadress."

Sylvandire gave a sigh, and slowly regained the depths of the hôtel.

## CONCLUSION.

CRETTE sprang into his carriage, the horses set off at a run, and he returned to the Hôtel d'Anguilhem.

He found Constance, alone and desolate, in a little salon, weeping to find her husband so gloomy and preoccupied.

"He believed himself in honor bound to keep his word," thought she; "but most assuredly he no longer loves me."

When Cretté opened the door she thought her husband was coming to seek her, and she quickly sprang forward to meet him; but, on seeing the marquis, she dropped back into her chair.

Cretté understood what was passing in the mind of the poor young wife; he went up to her reassuringly.

"Come, come," said he, "dry your beautiful eyes, dear lady, and let us return together to the salon. In fifteen minutes Roger will be himself again, and I can answer for your future."

Then he took her by the hand and led her toward the grand salon.

Breton was on guard at the door, in obedience to his orders.

The marquis beckoned to him; Breton came.

"My good fellow," said Cretté, "throw open both leaves of the door, and in your most pompous tones announce Madame Roger d'Anguilhem."

Having no reason for preventing the entrance of his master's wife and his friend, Breton obeyed on the

instant, and, inflating his lungs, he swung back the doors and made the arches echo with the name so dreaded by the chevalier, —

“Madame Roger d’Anguilhem!”

At this announcement, Roger, who, in the farthest corner of the room, was endeavoring to converse with d’Herbigny and Monsieur de Beuzerie, felt his legs give way beneath him, and sinking into an arm-chair, he covered his face with his hands.

Then, with a radiant smile on her lips, Constance entered, leaning on Cretté’s arm.

They advanced toward Roger, who, hearing the sound of their steps, and not daring to look up, wished himself a hundred feet under ground.

“Well, my friend,” said Cretté, as he clapped his hand on the other’s shoulder, and thereby made Roger shiver to the very marrow of his bones, “what is the matter? Here is Constance.”

“Ah! Cretté! ah! Constance,” cried he, “I thought — I beg pardon!”

“You thought what? Ah! Madame d’Anguilhem has come to look for you, and you are afraid,” said the marquis, taking his hand and slipping Sylvandire’s letter into it at the same time. “It is eleven o’clock, chevalier, take away your wife.”

“Yes! yes!” cried Roger, “to the end of the world, if needs be.”

“No, not so far,” replied Cretté, “that is useless now.”

Then, while the young couple were crossing the salon on the way to their apartment, he called out, —

“Have you heard the news? The Persian ambassador leaves to-morrow with all his suite. I propose, messieurs and mesdames, that we see them off, — they embark at Chaillot.”

"We will not go, will we?" said Constance, as she opened the door of their room.

"No, indeed!" answered Roger, as he closed it.

The next day Cretté informed his friend of his two promises to Mademoiselle Poussette, the first of which, the payment of twenty thousand livres, the marquis had scrupulously kept the night before.

As the chevalier was a man of honor, and incapable of belying his friend's word, we have no doubt but that in due place and season the second promise was kept with the same fidelity.

It is needless to add that Roger and Constance are still quoted, not at Paris, where great examples are soon lost, but at Loches and its vicinity, as a model pair.



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